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THE RELEVANCE OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING  
TO MENTAL HEALTH

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Division of Applied Theology  
Asbury Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Theology

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by  
Willard A. Rowell  
August 1961

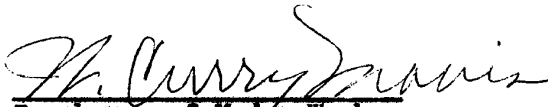
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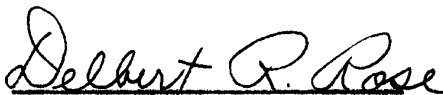
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Approved:

  
In charge of Major Work

  
Second Reader

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Thousands have collapsed under the strains imposed by our hectic age. All too many others lead lives of desperation. Multitudes are excessively perturbed and in frequent conflict with others.

They are emotionally unbalanced, perhaps vocationally miscast and depressed by poverty, or matrimonially mismatched, lonely, tortured by fears, despondent, and friendless.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. THE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM

Conservative estimates reveal that one out of ten persons in the United States is in need of treatment for some sort of emotional or mental disorder. At least one out of twenty will spend some part of his life in a mental institution. Each year about a quarter of a million persons are hospitalized as the result of mental or emotional breakdowns. One family in five will have a direct experience with some form of mental illness. For obvious reasons, mental illness has become a problem of acute personal concern.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karl R. Stolz, Tricks Our Minds Play On Us (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Herbert H. Stroup, "Keeping Sane in a Crazy World," The Christian Century, LXXVI (November 18, 1959), 1338-1340.

Nearly all doctors today readily acknowledge that a wide variety of physical ills have their roots in mental and emotional trouble. Furthermore, such diseases have often been healed or have noticeably improved, following the clearing up of a mental disturbance.

The medical profession, especially physicians and psychiatrists, have tried to convince the public that human health, happiness and efficiency depend greatly upon a healthy, serene mental life, guided by positive attitudes and impulses. The prevalence of mental illness and human experience have caused most people to no longer doubt this truth which the medical profession has been trying to convey to the public. "The problem of mental health is the most sensitive indicator of man's inability to orientate himself in this world today."<sup>3</sup>

## II. THE UNITY OR ONENESS OF MAN

Man is a whole and healthful influences are never limited to just a part. Health is wholeness. It involves physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and sociological factors. There is an increasing awareness of the essential inter-relation of the physical, psychological, and spiritual elements in man. Disharmony in any one aspect of man's

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<sup>3</sup>Academy of Religion and Mental Health, Religion, Science, and Mental Health (New York: New York University Press, 1959), p. 55.

being, physical, mental, or spiritual, open the way to disease and ill-health.

Real health is dependent on right functioning of the whole person. Since the person functions as an indivisible unit, anything that affects one part of his being exerts some influence on the other aspects also. When illness is present, it is a person who is ill. A person may be ill in body, mind, or in spirit. Not often is he ill in one way without being ill in other ways. . . . For life as we live it now, spirit, mind, and body are interdependent. Therefore, the health of one aspect is affected by the health of the other aspects.<sup>4</sup>

Man is one person, not a collection of three parts. He does not live first as a spirit, later as a mind, and at some other time as a body. Man functions as a three-in-one being, as a spirit-mind-body person. The spirit, mind, and body are merely three aspects of one person. They function together in unity. An act that humans designate as spiritual has mental and physical aspects; an act they call mental has spiritual and physical aspects; an act they call physical has mental and spiritual aspects. An act appears to them to be predominantly spiritual or mental or physical but whatever they do, they do it as a person. In actually living the three aspects of man are inseparable.<sup>5</sup> Even learned physicians and psychiatrists find it hard to discern where the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects leave off or begin

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<sup>4</sup>C. B. Eavey, Principles of Mental Health for Christian Living (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 46.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-43.

in a man's life. Therefore, when a person is ill, it is sometimes difficult to determine how ill he is and what treatment to prescribe.

### III. DEFINITIONS OF RELATED TERMS

Health. Obviously, health is a relative term. It is difficult to clearly define. What is a substantial measure of health to some folks would be severe illness to others. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary describes health as a "state of being hale, sound, or whole in body, mind, or soul; well being;"

The word "health" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "haelth," meaning hale, sound, or whole. It is significant that health may be defined in two different ways: (1) as a state of being hale or sound in body, mind, or soul, or (2) as merely the absence of disease. The first definition is a positive "freedom for" life, and possession of strength of mind or body, whereas the second is a negative "freedom from" illness, or that which would rob one of strength of mind or body. Synonyms of health are wholeness (with its connotation of the ability to act), hardiness (with its connotation of the capacity for enduring stress or suffering), and soundness (with its connotation of a firmness which is securely grounded in a solid structure).<sup>6</sup>

Mental Health. Mental health has been defined or described in numerous ways. As soon as mental health is mentioned many people immediately think of mental illness.

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas C. Oden, "What is Mental Health?" The Journal of Pastoral Care, XIV (Winter, 1960), 193-202.

However, mental health is much more than the mere absence of mental illness factors. Mental health is something all men desire for themselves, their relatives and their friends. Everyday goals and conversations of men center around happiness, peace of mind, enjoyment and satisfaction, which in a large measure make up mental health. It has to do with how an individual meets the demands of life as he has to face it. It requires a synchronizing and harmonizing of desires, ambitions, ideals, feelings, and conscience. Mental health is a state where a person understands intellectually or mentally the things which are happening to him, and to some extent how and why they happen. There are degrees of mental health and there is no definite line of demarcation between the mentally healthy and unhealthy. No one characteristic can be taken as evidence of good mental health or a lack of it.

Mental health means living a happy, useful life and getting along with yourself and other people. If you have good mental health you are, first of all, an individual and have your own likes and dislikes, interests and goals. You can accept responsibilities and do a good job of work in line with your training and abilities.

Most people agree that mental health is one of the most important things in life. Like physical health it is no single thing but is made up of many things. It is manifested in an

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<sup>7</sup>Health Publications Institute, Inc., How Is Your Mental Health? (Raleigh, North Carolina: Health Publications Institute, Inc., 1950), p. 2.



all-round sense of well-being and doing and naturally includes getting along with others.

Mental illness is not a single disease but many. It is not necessarily inherited but one may be born with a tendency toward becoming mentally ill. The archaic idea is still quite prevalent today--that there is disgrace in mental illness. This is not held among informed people. It is not due to a taint, nor is it a reflection on the patient's family. However, mental illness does not attack without warning. No single crisis can be wholly the blame for an emotional collapse. When mental illness is detected and prompt treatment is given, a rapid recovery is possible.

Mental health involves the development of a healthy attitude in the individual toward himself and toward the environment in which he lives so that he will achieve the maximum degree of self-fulfillment. In other words, environmental mastery suggests that the person with adequate mental health can endure a great deal of conflict, both internally and externally. He is further strengthened by mastering or overcoming obstacles as they arise.<sup>8</sup>

Health is correspondence with environment. If man is, as most would agree, body, mind, and spirit, then the health of the spirit is its correspondence with its

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<sup>8</sup>"Mental Health," The Encyclopedia Americana (1960 ed.), XVIII, 640-645.

environment, and the name of that environment is God.<sup>9</sup>

Religion in General. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines religion as "an awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being, arousing reverence, love, gratitude, the will to obey and serve, and the like; as, man only is capable of religion." Religion is not a substitute for something else. It brings something nothing else can bring. Right religion puts man in the best condition in which to face and work out a solution to most of life's problems. This is possible because it strengthens the resources with which problems are solved. Religious outlooks and practices help integrate a man's life around the reality of God and His universe.

Religion gives supreme and ultimate values which help to resolve conflicts within the individual and lay the basis for an integrated personality. . . . For many . . . individuals, religion has served as an integrative, stabilizing and even hygienic and therapeutic factor.<sup>10</sup>

Pure religion brings peace of mind. It offers solace to troubled souls. It seeks to correct faulty ways of thinking and living. "Religion often supplies sublimated and socially acceptable avenues for emotional experience and

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<sup>9</sup>Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology and Life (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1935), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup>Francis F. Powers, Psychology in Everyday Living (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1938), p. 441.

expression."<sup>11</sup> However, a religion that is only a system of thought is not enough. Religion must change a man. It must bring salvation.

Evangelical Christianity. Evangelical Christianity proclaims the message of deliverance from the old life dominated by sin, and the entering into of the abundant life given by Christ which leads to fulfillment and blessedness. The core of Christianity is a dynamic self-impartment of God to those who are prepared by faith to receive the gift and follow the teaching. Christianity endeavors to give meaning to life, to describe goals worth working for, worth achieving; to give vision and the long view-perspective to life. There is a tendency in human beings for self-assertion, self-perpetuation which leads to a hope of immortality. Evangelical Christianity centers around this hope of immortality, which tends to give completeness and meaning to life.

A vital Christian-conversion experience will bring the blurred life of a man into focus. The genius of evangelical Christianity is that it gives a man direction and a compass on which he can depend for consistency and stability.

It meets the daily and practical needs of human nature; the deep and enduring thirsts of the soul; and provides comfort for the sorrowing, courage for the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 441.

faltering, inspiration for the despairing, challenge for the aspiring.<sup>12</sup>

Personal Christian experience involves an individual's discovery of an eternal and satisfying relationship to Almighty God through the provisions of Jesus Christ the Son. Such an experience gives new meaning to life and a knowledge of the love and presence of God. "For the Christian, the living God is before and beyond and in all things: Creator, Righteous Judge, Redeemer, Sustainer--in whose love and power we live and find the meaning of our lives."<sup>13</sup> The true Christian life is well described in the phrase, the "life hid with Christ in God."<sup>14</sup> There are three requirements for such a life: regeneration, or a new and divine life in the soul; separation from sin and the world; and consecration to God. The main characteristics of this life are a simple trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and an absolute committal of oneself and his all to God's control and management. So when a man makes a total commitment to the Christian faith, it is carried into every phase and activity of his life. Genuine Christian faith includes not only the individual and

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<sup>12</sup>Bernard Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 223.

<sup>13</sup>Albert C. Outler, Psychotherapy and the Christian Message (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1954), p. 128.

<sup>14</sup>Colossians 3:3.

and his personal experience with God and his sense of God, but also Christianity as an integral part of his life and reaching also into the social aspect of it. Evangelical Christianity claims the entire life.

#### IV. VIEWPOINT OF THIS STUDY

This report assumes the following basic theological viewpoint: that the Bible is God's revealed, infallible, and holy Word; that it is God's message to man; that this Word was written by holy men of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who also illuminates its sacred pages to man's understanding and heart; that man is by nature a self-willed and self-centered sinner, in a state of rebellion against God; that man is completely dependent upon God for his salvation from the power and guilt of voluntary sins and the defilement of innate sin; that the way of salvation is by grace through faith in the atoning merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, and not of works; that development and progress are a necessity in the Christian believer's life. The evangelical interpretation of Scriptures is considered valid. Furthermore, this writer believes that the evidences of Church history indicate that the Evangelical Christian religion fits a person for right living, as well as preparing him for a life to come.

## V. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS STUDY

This writer has been of the opinion that there is a definite correlation between the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of man. This study has endeavored to investigate and report more clearly these relationships.

Man cannot divorce himself from his body. He lives his life in it and through it. Through it he experiences joy and pain. Likewise, man cannot get away from his mind. He thinks and tries to discover the meaning of life, and to work out life's problems. He has experiences that bring pain and pleasure. Before he is very old, man learns the meaning of fear, anxiety, hate, guilt, love, faith, courage, and hope. Through his emotional experiences, he either finds satisfaction or becomes frustrated.<sup>15</sup> By the time a child starts in the first grade of school he has learned many of the principles of health and hygiene. However, he probably does not become aware of mental hygiene and health until his early teens. For many years following his first awareness, he will have only a vague understanding of mental health.

A healthy body helps one to keep healthy mentally. But just as a healthy person may have a cold, or indigestion once in awhile or will turn his ankle or get the flu, so

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<sup>15</sup>Carroll A. Wise, Psychiatry and the Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 1

emotional difficulties may come, occasional periods of discouragement, depression, irritation, and quick temperedness. "Sometimes trouble does not appear in the form of a particular problem, but rather as inability to work, unhappiness, moody spells, wanting to be alone all the time, irritability or being too dependent on other people."<sup>16</sup>

Each individual has a limit as to the trouble and adversity he can stand. If his capacity is exceeded his nervous system will react in a sort of kick-back in spite of the individual's determination to control it. When the going gets tough, it is then that there is likely to be a breakdown and outside help is needed. This state is known as mental illness and is very common. According to the U. S. Public Health Service, it is America's No. 1 health problem. "It affects more people than polio, heart disease, and cancer combined. Its victims occupy nearly half of all the hospital beds in the country."<sup>17</sup>

Everyone desires good mental health. The problem is either to get it or to keep it. If one is aware of some of the basic principles of mental health, he can distinguish points of weakness in himself and in others. These can be corrected, modified, or compensated for in such a way so as

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<sup>16</sup>Health Publications Institute, Inc., How Is Your Mental Health? (Raleigh, North Carolina: Health Publications Institute, Inc., 1950), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

to prevent breakdown. George S. Stevenson, a medical consultant for the National Association for Mental Health, has suggested 10 Safety Signs For Good Mental Health:

1. A tolerant, easy-going attitude toward yourself as well as others. 2. A realistic estimate of your own abilities--neither underestimating nor overestimating. 3. Self-respect. 4. Ability to take life's disappointments in stride. 5. Liking and trusting other people and expecting others to feel the same about you. 6. Feeling a part of a group and having a sense of responsibility to your neighbors and fellowmen. 7. Acceptance of your responsibilities and doing something about your problems as they arise. 8. Ability to give love and consider the interests of others. 9. Ability to plan ahead and set realistic goals for yourself. 10. Putting your best efforts into what you do and getting satisfaction out of it.<sup>18</sup>

Man has failed to follow the principles of spiritual hygiene and health. The spiritual side of man has been sadly neglected. Penfield, the distinguished neurologist, has said: "We will always have to recognize the essential existence of the spiritual within man."<sup>19</sup> It is extremely difficult for man to face life's struggles without religion.

One of the great tragedies in the life of modern man is that he no longer thinks God or religion is very relevant to his problem. He attempts to solve his problems without the help and the power of God. A great many of the ills of the body and the mind are caused by malady of the spirit.

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<sup>18</sup>George S. Stevenson, "10 Safety Signs For Good Mental Health," Parents' Magazine (May, 1959), p. 127.

<sup>19</sup>Orin Ross Yost, "Man's Unfailing Anchor--Religion," Religion and Health, IV (March, 1955), p. 22.



It is possible for the health of the spirit to make or unmake the health of the whole person. A man's thoughts, his emotions, and his attitudes all have a part in making him what he is in sickness and in health.

Man needs a spiritual foundation in a world such as this: These are days of alarming tensions, fear, anxiety, and misguided energies. Men become restless under social pressures, conflicts in relationships, ruthless pursuit, and relaxed morals. Troubles for a man only begin when he divorces his daily life from his deep spiritual convictions. A healthy soul makes a healthy mind.

The problem of health and of regaining health when we are sick is basically the problem of establishing and maintaining a proper relationship with God--that God who has created us and who sustains us in the very cells and structure of our body, even when our thoughts are far from him. His healing power is at work whether we are serene or full of apprehension, whether we have a sense of fellowship or are sunk in the depths of loneliness, whether we are living creatively or are drifting, whether we have love in our hearts or resentment and bitterness. God's will and his healing power work in us whether we know it or not, whether we pay attention to it or not, whether we co-operate with it or fight against it.<sup>20</sup>

## VI. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

As a result of previous studies and the experience of this writer as a student-chaplain in a state mental hospital,

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<sup>20</sup>Richard C. Cabot, "God and Health," Religion and Health, VI (March, 1957), p. 22.

a growing conviction has come that the preventive power of wholesome Christian religion is being sadly neglected today. Therefore, the purpose of this particular study has been to take certain aspects of Christian living and note their relative importance to the mental health of man. This research has purposely centered in the psychological values of the Christian Religion for promoting, maintaining, and sustaining mental health, rather than the curative powers for mental illness, which are readily admitted.

## CHAPTER II

### CHRISTIAN LIVING DEFINED AND INTERPRETED

Christian living refers to the life oriented in and guided by the facts and values of historic Christianity. A Christian has facts as a basis for decision. Christian living involves religious beliefs, philosophical concepts, moral standards, goals, and value judgments.

#### I. THE APPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES TO THE LIFE

Christianity gives a man something to live for.

"Philosophers may deny purpose in the universe, but psychologists know that if purpose be taken out of human life, human personality decays."<sup>1</sup> One of the great causes of breakdown in mental health is a feeling of senselessness and aimlessness in life. This emptiness and meaninglessness often develops into an anxiety because of the lack or loss of a spiritual center.

The individual must have some belief in purpose in his life, however fragmentary, if he is to achieve personality health. Without purpose there cannot be meaning and without meaning one cannot in the end, live.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 216.

<sup>2</sup>Rollo May, The Art of Counseling (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 216.

The aim of the Christian religion is precisely in meeting this need. Christianity is the belief in the purpose of God and His purposes for man. Therefore it gives meaning to the total life-process.

Christianity gives man the greatest purposes in life. It tells man to live for the glory of a loving, holy God; it tells man to live for man by ministering to him the gospel of the glory of God; it tells man to live for the holy, the pure, the true, the beautiful. No other religion, no other philosophy, gives a man so much to live for as Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

Christian faith gives meaning to life. Christian living contributes to mental health by giving meaning to life. The meaning of existence today is what Saint Augustine felt it to be long ago. "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee."<sup>4</sup>

The Christian faith seeks and finds the meaning of life and the worth of human existence in being itself, in being beyond nature and existence, in the one, only, living God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Christian faith begins with man's inescapable, radical dependence and finds its rest in nothing less than the utterly dependable, the truly sufficient reality which establishes all our hopes and love securely.<sup>5</sup>

A man actually begins his Christian life when he encounters God in a vital experience of conversion. This

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<sup>3</sup>Rama, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>J. G. Pilkington (trans.), The Confessions of St. Augustine (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1943), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Albert C. Outler, Psychotherapy and the Christian Message (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1954), pp. 252-253.

experience gives a man a sense of reality and certainty. This sense of actually knowing reality and being sure that he does, meets a deep need in man and is of immeasurable value in his thinking and living. It is conducive to the maintaining and sustaining of mental health. Christian experience brings to a person a wonderful conviction that in Christ he has met Reality. This divine-human encounter introduces man to God through Jesus Christ and so the Christian knows God who is the source of all Being, the Author, the Sustainer, and the Finisher of all righteousness and morality as found in the Christian faith. In this new relationship, God is the Father of all who put their trust in Him. The Christian believer not only gains a sense of reality which he never had before, but he has with this sense of reality a great sense of assurance. The First Epistle of John is filled with verses dealing with the certainty of knowing Christ, and the assurance of Christian salvation. Thus the Christian has not only met reality, but he is sure that he has met Reality.<sup>6</sup>

The Christian Religion deals with man in a very specific way, because it gives him a confidence that he cannot produce on his own and that he cannot fully find in his environment. On the one hand, it relates man to his God and

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<sup>6</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 217.

on the other to the world around him. A special kind of confidence and assurance results from the fact that man feels he is loved and accepted beyond himself.

Because he is first loved, undeserving as he may be, man is enabled to respond with love and thus becomes the instrument through which the creative power of love is expressed in the world. Released by love from the restricting bonds of fear, he faces his environment with eagerness to participate in the wonders life has to offer. . . . This love also engenders within the individual a healthy love of self and a self-respect that are essential for a critical evaluation of self without fear. Through an objective understanding of himself, man can achieve a change and growth that will allow him to more adequately realize his potentialities.<sup>7</sup>

The mentally sick person is the one who has disintegrated. He is torn by wayward and discordant wishes, desires, and purposes. He is likely to be oppressed with a sense of sin and failure, conscious of weakness, inadequacy or ineffectiveness, out of harmony with God, his physical environment, or with other persons--his social environment. The disintegrated or divided person thinks much about himself. He will be concerned about the tasks to which he has given himself. In losing himself in service, he will have found himself. The Christian religion will do this for him. Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth!"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Academy of Religion and Mental Health, Religion, Science and Mental Health (New York: New York University Press, 1959), pp. 57-58.

<sup>8</sup>Luke 12:15.

The Christian Life is accurately to be described as a continuous effort at ego-integration. It sets the goal of integration of all our impulses, drives, emotions, and thoughts. They are individually and totally to be dedicated. The dedication is to the will of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

Christian faith reconstructs at the unconscious level.

Through faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord, the Christian principle is born or created deep in the unconsciousness. This inward energy of the Divine Spirit working through the unconscious mind expresses the inner self through the conscious thoughts and acts of an individual. When this Christian principle possesses the life, it removes inner conflict. It overwhelms doubt and puts an end to controversy regarding conduct. Such an experience calms the tempest within, unifies desires, and brings emotional assurance. This kind of stability is the root of mental health.

Christian faith works most effectively at the level of the unconscious or subconscious. It is in these depths of human nature that the power of Christ works to transform and renew a man. Furthermore, psychiatrists affirm that psychogenic ills begin at this level and then are later manifested outwardly. This being true, E. Stanley Jones must be right when he suggests that it is in the subconscious that

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<sup>9</sup>George H. Muecking, Emotional Problems and the Bible (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 26.

the Holy Spirit does His work.<sup>10</sup> A vital Christian experience establishes deep motivations which contribute to a meaningful and satisfying life. The person's drives and behavior have a new orientation. Even his view of the cultural, social, and religious mores are changed.

The Christian religion is more than a belief or a set of doctrines; it is a way of life and a philosophy of life. Christianity is more than a matter of subscribing to a statement of faith; it is conscious association with God in living under His sustaining power. Christian experience is more than a matter of feeling; it is union with God which is a matter of fact though the fact may be accompanied by feeling. Martin Luther wrote, 'Feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God, naught else is worth believing.' Christian living is not keeping certain moral laws, belonging to a church, observing certain ordinances, engaging in certain ceremonies, doing our duty; it is living in glad, eager, passionate devotion to God who has filled the vacuum in our life and become the Person altogether lovely to our soul.<sup>11</sup>

Christian faith offers a remedy to man in his quandary.

The Gospel message offers a two fold remedy to man in his quandary: conversion and the new life in Christ (includes psychological reorientation here and now) but also a total reorganization of life (personal and social) in view of the certainty of life to come. The Christian's faith in the life to come enables him to stand with firm conviction when other

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<sup>10</sup>E. Stanley Jones, Abundant Living (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942), p. 152.

<sup>11</sup>C. B. Eavey, Principles of Mental Health for Christian Living (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 123.



persons break. He can better face hardships and defeats because his present life does not need to pay big dividends. When others under similar strain suffer a break in mental health, the Christian draws heavily on spiritual resources. He reconsiders his aims and endeavors to make the best of it under the circumstances. His life is a long-term investment, with far reaching goals and horizons even to eternity.<sup>12</sup>

The sincere Christian person because of the inner center of his life acts conscientiously in the view of the total situation. He is guided by the reality principle of eternal values and he subordinates the pleasure or pain of the moment to the value of the whole and the final outcome. Life ceases to be an aimless course between birth and death, but instead becomes a sacred trust, a stewardship to God. As such, it has meaning, purpose, and goals. The Christian carries his commitment into every life situation. If he is a scientist, he cannot lock God out of his laboratory. If he is a physician, his commitment comes with him into the therapeutic situation. For example, the Christian views his occupation or work as a stewardship for God. Although he may not have the most pleasant, most interesting, most paying job there is, yet he feels he is doing a work which needs to

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<sup>12</sup>Simon Doniger, Religion and Human Behavior (New York: Association Press, 1954), pp. 65-66.

be done, which provides for him and his family. He sees his talents as a trust from God and seeks to develop them further. He seeks to know and to do the will of God in every phase of his life. So whether the Christian eats or drinks or whatsoever he does, he does it all for the glory of God.<sup>13</sup>

## II. THE RESULTS OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO THE LIFE

Christianity can bring that which fame, military victory and worldly success have been unable to provide--which in fact, they seem to destroy. It brings to the immortal spirit the sustenance which nothing else can render.

Christian experience alone provides man with an experience commensurate with his nature as free spirit. By free spirit we mean that a man is a spiritual being with a capacity for self-realization which can only find its proper fulfillment in God. Nothing less than God can really, actually satisfy man's spirit. Anything less than God leaves the spirit of man thirsty, hungry, restless, frustrated, and incomplete.<sup>14</sup>

Christian living satisfies the need of personal respect and dignity. It is a deep need of each normal human being to feel that he or she is truly a person--a center of life worthy of love, respect, confidence and trust. Belief in God includes belief in the purpose and the worthwhileness

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<sup>13</sup>I Corinthians 10:31.

<sup>14</sup>Bernard Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 215.

of life. This is internal and affects attitudes and emotions. But, it may be only relatively displayed outwardly. The experience, that faith in Christ provides, satisfies the deepest needs of the human heart. When the Christian religion is sincerely and genuinely followed, it holds a central meaning and motivation for the life. The individual's attitudes, and actions will issue in deeds of faithful devotion. The results of this vital relationship are in terms of spiritual maturity, stability of life, and productive love.

The fact is that a man who does not have his faith grounded in God is much more likely to suffer emotional disturbances than the truly religious man because the former is like a ship on a storm tossed sea. Perhaps he has no true purpose in life; he does not know where he is going; and consequently he has charted no course. He sometimes drifts; then through good intentions he gains control of himself for a time; but he lives in constant fear and uncertainty. Christianity is the answer to man's feeling of insecurity. This infinite God, the object of the Christian's adoration, is the only Power in whom a man may find security. Perhaps, the deep-rooted feeling of uncertainty and insecurity is the result of man's failure to recognize that things of the spirit are essential.

Unless all needs, including the religious or spiritual needs, of a man are met, his psyche--his soul--will still be hungry and he will not be a fully-developed and

mentally-healthy complete human being.<sup>15</sup>

The very essence of the Christian religion is to adjust the mind and soul of man.<sup>16</sup> This happens when a man is willing to face God with his sins. "The entire answer to the sin question, to guilt complexes, is found in accepting the sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ without reservation as fully of grace."<sup>17</sup> It is by grace that a man is saved. By faith he accepts the gift of God through Jesus Christ. He finds assurance of salvation. His trust in God brings him a sense of security that he can find nowhere else. As he casts his burdens upon the Lord, he finds an inward rest. Thus, he is freed from a multitude of needless anxieties and useless concerns which may have otherwise led to a mental breakdown. Problems and perplexities left entirely to Christ vanish in a way most unaccountable to human thought and reason. A man who resigns all to Him, accepts everything as coming from Him, and believes that He chooses and orders better for him than he could do for himself finds that his trust and confidence are more than justified.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Helen Gibson Hogue, Bringing Up Ourselves (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 134.

<sup>16</sup>Charles L. Allan, God's Psychiatry (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1958), p. 7

<sup>17</sup>Franklin F. Ellis, "The Answer to Mental Health," Child Evangelism, XV (January, 1956), p. 22.

<sup>18</sup>Eavey, op. cit., p. 123.

For some, their religion may be rudimentary and even peripheral to the central concerns of life, but this is not so with the genuine Christian. The Christian religion has a definite moral code and gives sanction and force to it. The Christian faith is a religion of the heart, and out of the heart are the issues of life. Christian living is not keeping certain moral laws and living a clean wholesome life, but it is a deep devotion to a righteous and holy God. When God directs and controls the life there is no longer a controversy regarding conduct. For the Christian faith enhances and endorses high moral standards. The central convictions of the Christian faith is that there is a moral purpose in the cosmic process--a power greater than men, that makes for righteousness. Furthermore, these powers of God, His will, and purpose are behind the efforts of the soul to live godly in Christ Jesus.

A Christian's experience with God gives him moral energy. He is endowed with a new moral will to do the right. His basic personality is wonderfully transformed. Through the transforming power of God, the unsaved man believing in Jesus Christ in just a few moments receives a new philosophy, a new theology, a new heart and a new life.<sup>19</sup> There appears to be a definite correlation between moral virtue and mental

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<sup>19</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 221.

health. When a man meets God in personal experience, he is so changed within that he has moral re-enforcement to face the issues of life. He views God's creation in a new light. The world in which he lives is a world that God hath made, he will rejoice and be glad in it. He sees life and death in a new light. He views his fellowmen differently. This Christian experience gives a new power to love and self-sacrifice both for God and for others. When a man is born of God and God's love fills his heart, he will be seen and known as a different person.

"Love is the creative force back of health, physical, social, spiritual. It ties the individual to his physical environment, his social group and to his God."<sup>20</sup> The life and teachings of Jesus Christ verify and exemplify the power of love.

He said that there were really two main principles of living on which all true morality and wisdom might be said to depend. The first was to love God with the whole of a man's personality, and the second to love his fellow men as much and in the same way as he naturally loved himself. If these two principles were obeyed Christ said that a man would be in harmony with the Purpose of Life, which transcends time.

These two principles, one of which deals with the Invisible and Unchanging, the other with the visible and variable, cover the total relationships of a man's life.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ramm, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>21</sup>J. B. Phillips, Your God Is Too Small (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), pp. 97-98.

A man cannot love God very much without loving his fellowmen. Likewise, he cannot love his fellowmen very much or for very long without a vital relationship to God--the source of love. Otherwise, there will not be enough love to go around.

True Christian living, then, is a life and labor of love. This is the result of first establishing a personal relationship with the God of love and then radiating His love to one's fellowmen.

## CHAPTER III

### PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

#### I. THE NEED FOR BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

The necessity for Christian conversion is a direct result of man's estrangement from God. Christian teaching calls this quandry in which man finds himself the state of sin. Sin signifies a deviation from the way and end appointed by God. The fact of sin is fundamental in Christian belief. Although human reason has forced the secularist to admit the existence of sin, unregenerate man is not so willing to accept the Christian teaching of original sin. Because, if man is a sinner from birth, he is alienated from God and has no good in himself. Thus he "cannot save himself nor manage his own destiny apart from God's grace."<sup>1</sup> Neither nature nor society can restore a man or bring him to the fulfillment of God's purpose. Thus, God has had to take the initiative in reclaiming and restoring man.

The Scriptures declare that mankind fell into sin through Adam's transgression. "Sin began in the self-separation of the will of man from the will of God."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Outler, Psychotherapy and the Christian Message (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>H. Orton Wiley and P. T. Culbertson, Introduction to Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1947), p. 164.



In other words, the first sin was the desire in the heart, the choosing of self-interests rather than God's interests. The overt act merely expressed the sin that had already been committed in the heart.<sup>3</sup>

To admit man's estrangement from God is to confess that God is a sovereign, righteous ruler. Furthermore, even in his sin, man is radically dependent upon the mercy and goodness of God. The sin nature leads to overt acts of sin and thus the sin of the first man has been repeated throughout the long history of our race. Why sin should be universal, is impossible to know. However, as members of a sinful race, men soon discover that they have an evil conscience and a sense of shame and degradation.

## II. THE REALIZATION OF SIN

There are several ways in which a man feels a moral failure before God. The true adult sense of sin, guilt, and shame which contact with the Holy God appears invariable to arouse, seems to come along at least four different lines.

(a) When a man suddenly sees the vast sweep of God's design in life, he realizes his cheap, rebellious effort to plan his own life has been a failure. He so much regrets his deficiencies and shortcomings, that he desires to be changed. This is real conviction for sin. (b) When a man envisions

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<sup>3</sup>Henry C. Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 255.

the consequences of his wrong actions and he realizes the hurt he does to God and others by his self-centeredness, he is likely to feel conviction. When he sees that his life is not merely out of harmony with God's purpose but this disharmony has injured and affected the lives of other people, his sins begin to weigh more heavily upon him. (c) Conviction may arise when a man, who has lived selfishly and carelessly, meets someone who has plainly found happiness and satisfaction in co-operating with what he can see of God's purpose. The sinner realizes how injudicious he has been. This is the beginning of a genuine sense of sin. (d) A man may resist and fear the good life for many years but when he suddenly sees that the goodness and love he has despised as weakness are in reality incredibly strong, he experiences a strong sense of sin. There are many ways that a man may come to the point of realization that he is a moral failure before God. For instance, he realizes that he has offended God and has spoiled His design; he has done harm to others or has found no satisfaction in the way he has been living. Yet he cannot do much about it. He can be sorry, and apologize and resolve to do better. But if he really has conviction for his sins, he will feel that some rapprochement must be made between his sinful self and a perfect God. Also, he wants some assurance that God can and will accept him into His fellowship. He desires desperately to be in harmony with

the meaning and purpose of life and yet feels helpless to do anything toward it.<sup>4</sup>

Guilt. A sense of guilt arises when a man becomes aware that his life does not measure up to the standards which to him are acceptable. Through the Gospel message and contacts with Christian people and other ways, he begins to feel that he ought to live more worthily. As he indulges in conduct that he cannot respect in others, he becomes deeply aware of his own failure. He has a troubled conscience, a feeling of frustration, of inadequacy--a sense of sin because he fails to do what he knows he ought to do. This acute disturbance, which is generally called the troubled conscience, or the sense of guilt, is what makes it impossible for the man away from God to enjoy peace of mind.

Guilt has at least three different meanings. First, there is guilt in the legal sense when a man is convicted for breaking the laws of his country. Secondly, there is guilt from breaking the laws of God. There are many sins against God that are not illegal according to human codes. For example, a man may lie or lose his temper or cheat and will not be indicted in the courts in any ordinary way. The two types of guilt afore mentioned are objective. A third

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<sup>4</sup>J. B. Phillips, Your God Is Too Small (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), pp. 110-114.

type of guilt is very subjective. It is the guilt a man feels when his conscience condemns him. This is associated with shame and failure. This kind of guilt can bring about much physical and mental suffering. Feelings of guilt are associated with the conscience. Because they are so painful and strong, they are repressed into the deeper levels of mind. But here guilt feelings can do even more harm although the individual may be unaware of them. Guilt sets up tension and distress which may affect any organ of the body. It also has harmful effects on the mind and spirit. Guilt feelings are an indication that something is wrong in an individual's relationships. If the relationship is dealt with, then the guilt should leave. When guilt helps a man to discover and correct his faulty relationships, then it is beneficial. The Bible is very much concerned with the problem of sin, guilt, and forgiveness.

Guilt sometimes continues in the life of a Christian believer because of misunderstanding or a misguided conscience. So it becomes necessary to distinguish between evil and sin. Although it is true that all sin is evil, yet not all evil is sin. That is, thoughts may come into the mind which are undoubtedly evil but not therefore, necessarily sinful. Sin is the result of failure to conform to or transgression of God's laws. It is missing the mark and failing to follow the right way. Sin signifies a disposition

or state as well as an act. Outward acts are condemned only when they are regarded as issuing from evil dispositions. However, when guilt is gone and there is victory, still one must accept a certain amount of human feelings and human limitations.<sup>5</sup>

No Christian who understands and accepts the fact of God's forgiveness should ever continue for long in the state of guilt. Confession and acceptance of the promises of forgiveness to be found in the Bible should rid him of it. It is surprising to find how ignorant some people are about the meaning of forgiveness. They never can enjoy peace of mind because they are continually haunted by the memory of some past sin. They continually dwell in the shadow of their own past misdeeds instead of advancing into the light and freedom of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The safe way to find relief from guilt is to clearly acknowledge failure and sin and seek forgiveness from and reconciliation with whomever has been offended and transgressed the most. One of the deep needs of human nature is to have a consciousness of forgiveness from and reconciliation with God and then with those persons and groups from whom a man has been alienated.<sup>7</sup>

The solution of the problem of guilt is in the Gospel, in a God whose love reaches out to man even to the point

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<sup>5</sup>Ernest White, Christian Life and The Unconscious (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 153-160.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>7</sup>Charles T. Holman, The Cure of Souls (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), pp. 239-240.

of accepting the suffering caused by man's rebellion in order to break down that rebellion and estrangement and create Sonship. Sonship, not omnipotence, is the way to health and salvation.<sup>8</sup>

If a man tries to cover his sense of guilt it usually festers. When he is willing to forsake his sins and be forgiven, he is greatly changed. Both the Old and New Testaments show that men who have truly met God have first had an attitude of repentance. That is, they had a desire to change and get release from guilt feelings, along with an honest and humble confession which shared the feelings of guilt with God. The confessee relies on the goodness of God's mercy, love, and grace. This kind of an experience leads to release from guilt and the establishment of a relationship of devotion and love toward God.<sup>9</sup>

Confession. The need for confession of sins committed, or of wrong done, has been steadily insisted upon by the Christian religion as a condition of forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a cathartic value in confession. Confession is not only the revealing of one's self to God but insight is gained into one's own self as he confesses.

Confession involves a profound sense of honesty, a discovery of that in ourselves which really needs to be confessed, a distinguishing between that which is imaginary evil and that which is real evil, a sorting

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<sup>8</sup>Carroll Wise, Psychiatry and the Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 76.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

out and honest facing of our basic attitudes toward ourselves and toward others and toward God. It involves a relating of actual feelings of guilt to experiences out of which the guilt arose, and a relinquishing of the feeling of guilt when the necessary growth has been achieved.<sup>10</sup>

True confession requires that one bring out into the open the failing that has brought defeat. He must face it frankly and honestly and deal with it realistically. The mere confession is not what counts but what follows it. That is, there is such a change in the inner life as well as the outward conduct of the individual that he finds self-respect and satisfaction in his new life lived according to the purpose of God.

The common experience of men is that there is some form of confession just prior to a conversion crisis. This is due in part to the sense of unworthiness and sense of failure that accompanies guilt feelings. When these inward feelings are exteriorized through confession, there is a relief which comes and brings joy and peace. The prayer of confession is apt to burst forth as the expression of an overwhelming sense of guilt.

As long as sin is secret, it must be concealed, repressed, and guarded. The neurotic tensions play around evasion and defense. Confession is therefore cathartic, purging and releasing the pent-up guilty

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

tensions into open expression.<sup>11</sup>

### III. THE CONVERSION AND NEW BIRTH EXPERIENCE

Conversion is a turning to God. As the soul turns to God, so God draws near to the human soul; and God does for him what no man can do. The whole personality undergoes a deep transformation. True conversion involves the radical change of life's patterns, leading to a fresh spiritual and moral beginning. The old life with its pattern of action is replaced by a new life--spiritually, morally, and intellectually.

The term conversion is used to designate the process by which the soul turns from sin to salvation. In the Scriptures conversion usually refers to the human act of turning away from sin.<sup>12</sup> Conversion may be psychologically described in the words of William James. It is "the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold on religious realities."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Religion (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 224.

<sup>12</sup>Wiley and Culbertson, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>13</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1929), p. 189.



Preconversion states are usually characterized by one or more of three kinds of emotion: conviction of sin, a sense of need, and fear. These preconversion conflicts are resolved by conversion itself. In many cases crisis is sudden and may be dramatic, while in others there is a gradual consciousness of this new experience without any sudden change.<sup>14</sup> Conversion experiences may be as varied as life itself. But even so, there is a point of demarcation, where an individual's faith takes him from the unregenerate state to a newness of life in Jesus Christ. The essential mark of conversion is the completeness of the conversion. However, no conversion will instantly change everything forever. As the seeker responds to the Spirit of God, he takes one step after another no matter how painful or difficult it may be.

Conversion is primarily an act of the mind and will in anticipation of what God can do. It is a turning of the soul from sin to God. It involves an act and movement of the whole mind and soul out of sin into righteousness. Conversion does not begin with the emotions, fears, or hopes but with the truth of God and His Word. When a man is exposed to truth, he finds that there is antipathy between his nature and the will of God, then he experiences conflict and unrest. Christian truth appeals to the minds and motives of men.

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<sup>14</sup>White, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

James Snowden suggested three lines of reasoning and steps in conversion. They are: (a) a changing of mind on the subject of sin; (b) an act of repentance in turning from sin, followed by an act of faith in turning towards God and Christ; (c) obedience by which faith completes itself in fact.<sup>15</sup>

Repentance. Every normal unsaved person has some sense of sin and guilt, no matter how saturated his soul is with sin or how dull his conscience. Genuine repentance, wrought in the heart of a sinful man by the Word and Spirit of God, has always been coupled with profession of Christian faith. Repentance includes a change of heart, attitude, and purpose. It is not the same as remorse. Remorse looks at the past with vain regret; but repentance looks to the future with hope. To repent is to stop denying sin and evading the guilt, to quit resisting that which prevents the cure, and to admit freely the evil one has done. The conflicting impulses of uncertainty and indecision are relieved when a man honestly faces his sins. There is inner release and a new freedom when through genuine repentance a man accepts the blame and desires a new start.<sup>16</sup> Repentance is not a

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<sup>15</sup>James H. Snowden, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916), pp. 154-163.

<sup>16</sup>Johnson, op. cit., pp. 223-224.

feeling of self-punishment but is facing sin in its true light as human guilt and folly and disobedience against God. Repentance is the experience of being willing and able to change the whole mind towards sin. This includes thought, feelings, attitudes and the will. Repentance is a change in which man takes an active part, not something that is done for him! Man repents; God does not repent for him. Man faces his past and endeavors by the help of God to change his attitudes and relationships. True repentance involves the whole personality in a change of mind, a godly sorrow, and a resolution to reform. It is incited in the heart of a sinful person by the Word and Spirit of God. The response is directed to God in contrition and self-reproachment. Repentance is not only an act of the will, but also an experience of growth in which harmful attitudes and desires are renounced, and mature, Christian attitudes are accepted as valid and determining for oneself. Repentance is the gateway into the Christian life. The continuance of this penitent state enables the believer to maintain a living relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Christian contrition, true repentance, is the honest owning of the wrong, and the free acceptance of responsibility--both in the atmosphere of God's redeeming love as we know it in Christ Jesus. It means more than self-rebuke; it means accepting God's just judgment of our

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<sup>17</sup>Wise, op. cit., p. 92.

unfaith. It means far more than an easy rescue; it is the frank confession of our reliance on God's grace as the authentic power in our reconciliation to God and our recovery of moral insight and energy.<sup>18</sup>

The Scriptures lay much stress on repentance. It is an absolute condition to salvation.<sup>19</sup> Taking the word in a broad sense, repentance is essentially a change of mind. However, psychologically speaking there are three aspects to repentance. (1) The intellectual element is seen in the recognition of personal responsibility for sin, personal guilt and helplessness, and an apprehension of God's mercy. (2) The emotional element is seen in a change of feeling toward sin. There is a sincere sorrow, a sense of conviction of sin issuing from a sense of guilt, a sense of shame and a newly acquired distaste for sin. (3) The volitional element is seen in the change of will and disposition. There is a resolve to live differently. This is inwardly turning from sin. It should be remembered that a man is not saved for repenting but when he repents and believes. Repentance is an act of the sinner himself in response to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Repentance involves a new moral consciousness of sin in which the sinner identifies himself with God's thoughts about it. Repentance is not a satisfaction rendered to God, but a condition of the heart necessary

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<sup>18</sup>Outler, op. cit., pp. 236-237.

<sup>19</sup>Luke 13:2-5.

before a man can believe unto salvation.<sup>20</sup>

To summarize, genuine repentance involves a conviction within a man that he has sinned and is guilty before God. It includes contrition or a broken and contrite heart on account of sin. It produces confession and implies a strong desire to escape or be saved from sin. There is voluntary abandonment of sin and a turning to God and a bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance.<sup>21</sup>

Faith. True repentance never exists apart from faith. Likewise, one cannot turn from sin without at the same time turning to God. Conversely, it may also be said that true faith never exists without repentance. "True repentance brings a change of mind, which followed by an act of saving faith, brings the soul into the state of initial salvation."<sup>22</sup> When there is genuine repentance, saving faith becomes at once the condition and the instrument of salvation. Faith has been and always will be the basic and essential means of contact with spiritual reality.

In scriptural usage, the term "faith" is used in two ways: (1) To indicate, or to denote, the content of the

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<sup>20</sup>Thiessen, op. cit., pp. 352-354.

<sup>21</sup>Wiley and Culbertson, op. cit., p. 267.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

Christian Gospel--a body of beliefs. (2) It is used to signify the human response to the body of Christian truth. These two uses of the term are related. There is a minimum of information necessary before saving faith can become active. Faith means more than a mere assent to a set of facts or creeds set before it. The Latin word "fides" means to trust; confidence; belief in God and religion. It is not easy to formulate a simple and adequate definition of faith. The Scriptures represent faith as an act of the heart. It therefore involves thought, will, and emotions. There is an intellectual, an emotional, and a volitional aspect to faith. The intellectual element includes belief and rational assent to the revelation of God in Nature and in the Scriptures. There is acknowledgement of truths taught--that man is sinful, God has provided redemption; there are certain conditions to salvation; and God promises his children many blessings. The emotional element is certainly a constituent of faith. It is the awakening of the soul to its personal needs, the personal application of the redemption provided through Christ, and the immediate assent to these truths. The voluntary element in faith is the logical outgrowth of the intellectual and the emotional. If a man accepts the revelation of God and His plan of salvation as true and comes to assent to it as applicable to himself personally, he should logically go on to appropriate it for himself. A man

is not saved unless his faith has these elements in it.<sup>23</sup>

Faith is more than belief. . . . Belief is judgment. Faith is devotion of total personality in loyal assurance. Belief may be less than knowledge, but faith is more. "Faith is reason grown courageous." The dynamic quality of faith is indicated in a volitional activity of purpose, commitment, and steadfastness. Regardless of contrary evidence, opposition, or suffering, one who has faith in Thou will continue to give unswerving loyalty. This is the meaning of faithfulness--an act of willing and persevering devotion. The emotional quality of faith is indicated in a basic confidence and security that gives one assurance. In this sense faith is the opposite of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Without emotional security there is no relaxation, but tension, distress, and instability. Assurance is the firm emotional undertone that enables one to have steady nerves and calm poise in the face of danger or confusion.<sup>24</sup>

Thus faith includes more than intellectual assent and belief, there must also be a personal commitment and trust.

Faith in God which leads to acceptance of His forgiveness and His saving grace includes within its compass the intellect, the will, and the emotions. It includes something more than a mere emotional crisis. If will is lacking, a religious emotional crisis soon passes, leaving the person essentially unchanged. In true conversion, the will of man comes into line with the will of God.<sup>25</sup>

Faith is a vision, a quality, or capacity of the soul for action, manifesting itself in the soul as a grace. It is the free gift of God whereby spiritual truth is apprehended and spiritual life is engendered. Faith is the duty of man, as well as the gift of God. A man can to some extent,

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<sup>23</sup>Thiessen, op. cit., pp. 355-358.

<sup>24</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>25</sup>White, op. cit., p. 61.

reason things out about God, but having done this faith must operate. To have faith is to believe, and to believe is to feel and to act. The power to trust God belongs to every man through the help of the Holy Spirit. This provision has been made through the atonement. God is pleased when men trust Him. Without faith it is impossible to please God, therefore when men have genuine faith they must please Him. God is always ready to be pleased and gratified with faith. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.<sup>26</sup>

Obedience. Obedience is the means whereby faith completes itself in fact. It is predominantly an act of the will. The will has already been active in repentance and faith, for each involve thought, feeling, and will. Obedience to the truth of God's Word and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit is necessary to the fulfillment of faith. To have faith is to believe and to believe is to feel, to obey and to act. There is no contradiction or antagonism between faith and obedience. They are two aspects of salvation; one is the root and the other is the fruit. Both are equally necessary. Just as all the three steps of repentance, faith, and obedience are necessary to complete the one act by which the sinner changes his whole mind from sin unto salvation

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<sup>26</sup>Hebrews 11:6.



and life.<sup>27</sup>

Faith and obedience are necessary to attain a right spiritual relationship to God, but they are also fundamental essentials for maintaining and sustaining that relationship. There must be faith toward God and absolute obedience to all the known will of God. There is a blessing in every act of obedience, but the moment a soul hesitates he begins to obstruct his relationship to the Creator. There can be no true union with God without a conscious and deliberate alignment of one's own will with the will of God. "The obedience God requires is not a slavish obedience or a mechanical obedience, but the obedience of a 'reasonable service', rendered joyfully with understanding by beings who are free to choose intelligently."<sup>28</sup> In obedience to Christ renunciation is life, not death. Sacrifice to Christ and for His sake is to joy and not to sorrow. Grim and inflexible though it may appear, perfect obedience to the known will of God holds life's richest treasures.

Conversion and the new birth summarized. A vital Christian conversion experience can organize a person's life in such a way that he feels integrated and that his life has a purpose which is satisfying to him. When one turns to

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<sup>27</sup>Snowden, op. cit., pp. 163-164.

<sup>28</sup>Havay, op. cit., p. 251.

Jesus Christ, there is a new center around which to gather emotional desires and around which one constructs his emotional patterns. The conversion experience may be described as a sudden release from the sense of estrangement and fear and the discovery of a new sense of fellowship with God. It includes a new concept of one's self and his role in life and is followed by development growth.

A Christian conversion experience tempers the uncontrollable desire for success. It liberates the mind and spirit from the urgency to succeed in everything. Conversion is usually evident to everyone because it brings about a considerable change in the mental life and personality of an individual. Often there is a considerable change in the person's physical and social life.

Students of the psychology of religious experience have pointed out that the subconscious is involved not only in general religious experience but also in the conversion process. The Christian faith offers not only forgiveness of sins committed, but also a new work of God in the inner spirit to overcome the evil, a work of the Holy Spirit in the subconscious depths of being, transforming the nature of the guilty person.<sup>29</sup> It is normal for a person to seek a better and more satisfying and happier spiritual life.

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<sup>29</sup>James D. Van Buskirk, Religion, Healing and Health (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 105.

"Spiritual conversion is an experience which marks the end of man's search for the right road, but not the end of his spiritual journey."<sup>30</sup>

A true conversion takes all of a person and redirects the total life upon a new course. It holds the dramatic appeal of eternal destinies and divine imperatives. It offers a great adventure to lose all or win all, a decisive choice between good and evil.<sup>31</sup>

Thus conversion means a turning, a change of direction, an alteration in mental attitude and belief. It is a conscious act of the mind by which previous belief's are discarded and new beliefs take their place. It is usually accompanied by new birth. Conversion is a conscious and deliberate movement of the mind in a new direction, but it is not the same thing as new birth. In distinguishing it from conversion, the new birth is an unconscious transaction apart from the will of man, wrought in the spiritual depths of the personality by the Holy Spirit of God. Truly, it has effects which reach the conscious level and bring evident results, but in itself the new birth is not known to consciousness. Revelation helps one to understand and know the fact of the new birth, but the changes brought in life and conduct are usually readily perceived. The new birth is supernatural and sudden, occurring at a definite moment in time; although

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<sup>30</sup>Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 287.

<sup>31</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 129.

it may or may not immediately enter into consciousness. Since it is essentially an unconscious change, it is apprehended by faith.<sup>32</sup>

There are three movements or steps in the conversion and the new birth process. First, there is mental conflict as a result of consciousness and conviction of sin. This is manifested in stress, tension and unrest. The second stage is an emotional crisis. After illumination and consideration of the issues involved, this crisis is resolved by an attitude of submission and surrender. When the conflict has subsided, there comes a sense of calm and peace accompanied by assurance and relaxation.<sup>33</sup> Psychologically speaking the most obvious change that takes place in conversion is a change of emotional tone from a state of conflict and unrest to a condition of peace and happiness. The convert finds peace and joy in believing. There is a rearrangement of the mental pattern. The whole personality undergoes a process of reconstruction resulting in a redirection of aims and a new quality of emotional response to the material and social environment.

What actually happens in a man's personality? "From

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<sup>32</sup>Ernest White, Christian Life and The Unconscious (New York: Harper and Bros., 1955), pp. 30-33.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 51

the divine side the change of heart is called regeneration, the new birth; from the human side it is called conversion. In regeneration the soul is passive; in conversion . . . it is active."<sup>34</sup> The new birth is the result of communication of divine life to the soul. It is a new birth because a new nature or heart is imparted. The term heart as used in Scriptures means the soul or self. It is that in man which thinks, feels, wills, and acts. Thus, the very dynamics of personality are spiritually transformed in the new birth. Old resentments disappear when attitudes are transformed. New interests and a new sense of values are manifest because ideals and sentiments are renewed and redeemed. Old habits lose their force and are replaced by new behavior patterns centered around righteousness. The new birth is a result of man cooperating with God. It is the spiritual rebirth which God has provided for and wills for every man. The new birth and conversion are not exactly synonymous. The new birth is deeper. It is possible for conversion to be only psychological. As a result of admiration and contemplation a man could actively desire to reform without the willingness to be transformed. But when there is submission to the Spirit and will of God the springs of human behavior are transformed. Thus, it takes God and man to make this new creature called

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<sup>34</sup>Thiessen, op. cit., p. 367.

a Christian. Man cannot be just passive.<sup>35</sup>

True Christian conversion has a deeper content than psychological change. The will is an important factor in conversion. In true conversion, the will of man comes into line with the will of God. New birth and eternal life are the gift of God, conversion is the act of choice by which a man receives God's gifts.

The word conversion means a turning, a change of direction, an alteration in mental attitudes and belief. It is a conscious act of the mind by which former beliefs are discarded and new beliefs take their place. It does not necessarily imply new birth, or regeneration, although it may be accompanied by new birth.<sup>36</sup>

Since conversion involves an act of the will, it is often accompanied by some degree of emotional disturbance. Although it is a conscious and deliberate movement of the mind in a new pattern, it is not the same thing as new birth.

The new birth takes place in the depths of a man's personality. It is not primarily a change of material already present, but a new principle is introduced into the center of life. It is wrought by the Spirit of God. However, God never works by imposing from without, but rather He works by moulding from within. The new birth is un-

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<sup>35</sup>W. Curry Mavis, "Principles of Pastoral Counseling" (Class Lecture Notes, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky, Spring, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup>White, op. cit., p. 29.

conscious in its inception, but manifested through conscious means and is know for certain as fact by faith in what God has revealed in the New Testament. "A new birth is a major change in life whether sudden and dramatic or quiet and inconspicuous."<sup>37</sup>

There are three cardinal signs of the new birth. The first is a desire to pray. It is as natural for the born-again man to cry to God and commune with Him as it is for the new-born babe to cry. Secondly, there is a distinctive desire to bring others, especially friends and relatives, to a knowledge of Christ. The third characteristic is the desire to belong to and fellowship with some group of Christians. The local church affords the opportunity of fellowship, worship, and nurture for the new-born in Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Although, the terms conversion and the new birth are often used interchangeably, they are not completely synonymous. This writer has endeavored to show the distinction. But for practical purposes there is only one observable result, the new man. The essential mark of the conversion-new birth experience is the distinctiveness of the transformation. Harmony within is manifested in harmony without. Communion within is evidenced by outward devotion to Christ

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<sup>37</sup>Johnson, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>38</sup>White, op. cit., pp. 38, 39.

and His cause.

#### IV. THE EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS

Nothing but God's forgiveness can wipe away the stains and heal the scars of sin. The soul is never truly at peace that lives in sin. The only relief from the pains of sin in the soul and the only hope for a distressed conscience are found in experiencing the pardoning love of God. Forgiveness is the natural consequence and reward of repentance. Once the sinner is genuinely resolved to lead a new life, he experiences God's forgiveness and is left with a feeling of acceptance, and approval. Through this expression of forgiveness, he is assured that God sees and understands his problems of life. Forgiveness draws an absolute veil of oblivion over confessed sins, even before the eyes of God. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."<sup>39</sup>

The miracle of forgiveness is not merely that it wipes away the account of special sin, but that it has the wonderful power of redeeming and transforming the sinful spirit, and of rooting out the desire to sin. Its work is radical and goes deep. It is a part of the process of forming a new creature, of re-creating the whole life into spiritual sanity and health.<sup>40</sup>

A man needs to get the forgiveness of his brother for

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<sup>39</sup>Hebrews 10:17.

<sup>40</sup>Oliver Huckel, Spiritual Surgery (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1912), p. 69.



the wrongs he has done to him. If he is not willing to make things right so far as possible, he has no right to ask God to forgive him. There are times when both confession and restitution are imperative. The Christian religion is not just between a man and his God; it also involves right relations with his brother man. There is nothing that will stunt spiritual growth as much as an unforgiving spirit. This kind of spirit can only be resolved through the active power of Christ within one's life.

A man may seek forgiveness from his fellowmen and endeavor to make restitution but a real experience of the power of God is necessary to suffice. For no forgiveness so deeply affects the whole being as does God's. No other power can reach down into the very depths of the personality and transform it into a new creature by His Spirit's working.<sup>41</sup>

The Christian experience of forgiveness is not an earned acquittal nor an indulgent dismissal of the guilty. It is not, primarily, a forensic affair at all. Man, repentant, faces the transforming, reordering impact of God's grace on man's disorder.<sup>42</sup>

Scripture promises are emphatic on the fact of divine forgiveness. The proper conception of God's forgiveness is the restoration of relationship. It means that the believer's

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<sup>41</sup>Ivan Buskirk, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>42</sup>Outler, op. cit., pp. 235-236.

relationship with God is as though he had never sinned. Forgiveness includes the ending of penalty. However, forgiveness does not cancel all the effects and consequences of sin. They continue, although forgiveness changes their nature and effect on personality. The central idea in forgiveness is that it brings at once the restoration of the father-son relationship which sin has broken. No matter what consequences may have to be borne, the relationship is as true as it was before sin broke it. This is only possible through the pardoning love of God.<sup>43</sup>

#### V. THE SENSE OF ASSURANCE

No one knows better than God, the Creator of the race, just how harmful it is for man to continually feel uncertain. God never intended for His creatures to be insecure; and man was not that way until he sinned and turned his back on God, the very source of all certainty and security. Insecurity is definitely opposed to God's nature. He is the author of all security and is complete security in Himself. There is absolutely nothing in this world than can compare with the security that is found in God.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Weatherhead, op. cit., pp. 336-338.

<sup>44</sup>Clyde Narramore, The Way to Happiness (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), pp. 174-176.

The term "assurance" is most commonly used to denote the firm persuasion of one's own salvation. Salvation from sin is a transaction in which one finds God. The individual comes to know God, and enters into conscious communion with Him. Assurance of personal salvation is that which one believes is true concerning himself at any given time.

Assurance comes by way of the witness of the Holy Spirit of God; but nevertheless the Spirit refers the soul to the promises in the Word of God, and assurance comes when a man believes them. John Wesley emphasized the witness of the Spirit. He held that:

. . . the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.<sup>45</sup>

The witness of the Spirit brings a sense of forgiveness of sins and at the same time a sense of belonging to God. There is a consciousness of a new spiritual relationship with God in contrast to the old life. It is this conscious union with Christ which gives assurance of salvation. The witness of the Spirit, although a new and direct revelation from God to the believer, strengthens previously existing faith until he who possesses this faith cannot any longer doubt that he possesses it.

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<sup>45</sup>Wiley and Culbertson, op. cit., p. 293.

Christian assurance helps meet many basic needs of the human personality. Men crave security and certainty. Certitude regarding spiritual things is highly desirable. The Scriptures teach that the normal Christian experience is one in which the Christian has conscious acceptance with God. The enjoyment of the Christian faith lies in assurance. Assurance of eternal life is obtained by believing God's testimony. The conditions having been met, God's Word says the result is salvation. Some measure of assurance may be had by inference. There are marks of a changed life and fruits of the Christian life. A clear conscience in contrast to a former evil conscience contributes to the sense of assurance.

Christian assurance comes through the experience of divine forgiveness. There is psychological as well as spiritual change when the load of sin is lifted. This results in a sense of right and righteous living. This way of life is manifested in a new love for others. Then there is an awareness of sonship. This assurance of adoption is not only that the converted sinner has the forgiveness and favor of God, but also a feeling of "belongingness" in the family of God. Christian assurance has definite psychological-spiritual significance for the individual. It helps him to accept himself, even with his limitations. Estrangement is abolished and replaced by a feeling of security. An assur-

ance of divine acceptance provides a measure of status and recognition. There is a consciousness of belonging to God and belonging to a body of believers and even to a local church. Christian assurance promotes purposefulness in this life and confidence in the future life.<sup>46</sup> Others things that certainty produces are steadfastness of purpose, discernment to know the will of God, growth and stability in grace, victorious living and peaceful dying.

Assurance is the privilege of every Christian believer. Anyone who lives without it is living beneath the New Testament norm of Christian experience. The Christian has a positive assurance of God's faithfulness. This not only brings a feeling of spiritual security but the relaxation which comes from trust in a competent God contributes to good mental health.

#### VI. PERSONAL COMMITMENT OF THE LIFE.

The surrender that a man makes at the time of his conversion is but the beginning. Before he goes very far he becomes aware that Christian discipleship demands a total commitment of the life. Christ dwelling in his heart means that his affection centers in Him. The whole conception of the relationship of the believer to Christ as expounded in

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<sup>46</sup>Mavis, op. cit., p. 5.

the Pauline epistles implies an organic unity. The believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer. In fact, Christ is the life.

This is not to infer that personality of the believer ceases to function, or that he loses his individuality. But when Christ dwells in the heart a new motive and a new goal are given to all the forces latent in the mind, so that the whole direction of life and conduct undergoes alteration. Instincts are not subdued but are given a new aim. They are redirected by the Holy Spirit of God.

When a man totally abandons self and surrenders to the complete will of God, the presence of Christ fills his life. This Presence is the source of power for living a victorious Christian life. His presence in the heart is the source of love, for "God is love." When practicing the presence of God, a man may be expected to be guided by Him. An individual can realize the will of God and His direction just as far as he is willing to go. This does not mean that He directs every petty detail of life, for God expects man to use the reason and intelligence He has given him. However, the life that is controlled and energized by the Holy Spirit of God has an underlying unity of purity and perfect love. This is the quality commonly spoken of as holiness. The life of holiness is characterized by a recoil of the pure

soul from sin and a love for righteousness.<sup>47</sup>

Holiness is the readjustment of our whole nature, whereby the inferior appetites and propensities are subordinated, and the superior intellectual and moral powers are restored to their supremacy; and Christ reigns in a completed renewed soul.<sup>48</sup>

Here is true integration of personality!

A life characterized by holiness and victory is only possible when there is complete surrender to God. Personal commitment of the life to His power, His will, and His guidance is the Christian's secret of a happy, well-integrated life.

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<sup>47</sup>Wiley and Culbertson, op. cit., pp. 317-323.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 324.

## CHAPTER IV

### ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO MENTAL HEALTH

The Christian religion seeks the good life, and the godly life. It cherishes and preserves human values. The Christian's God is not indifferent to human values. The Almighty works in co-operation with man to achieve within him the principles which make for a good life as well as a godly life.

Christian experience contributes to a balanced life. This does not mean an insensitive or indifferent life. It is not that the one who is a Christian will not experience fear, worry, grief or indignation, et cetera; or that he will not become aroused or excited and depressed or sullen, but that he takes all these things normally without collapsing. "Health of soul depends upon facing the situation, analyzing it correctly, and securing an adequate adjustment to it."<sup>1</sup>

Christianity calls for one to acknowledge his imperfections and sins and face himself and the facts, frankly and clearly. This kind of perspective contributes to mental health. "The best life is lived, not on the low levels of easy standards, but on the higher levels where one earnestly

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<sup>1</sup>Charles T. Holman, The Cure of Souls (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 69.



strives toward the ideal."<sup>2</sup> It is certainly an aid to mental fitness to feel that one is living rightly, especially in a world whose laws require that he must reap what he sows. In times of distress he can appeal to that same spirit of righteousness. There need be no regrets for right living. The principle of righteousness gives a man something to live by and something to die by. Such a faith and conviction brings a sense of purposefulness and something worth living for as well as something to live by. "Healthy religious beliefs are constant, supportive, yet flexible in adaptation to new insights, discoveries, and information."<sup>3</sup> By its very principles true Christianity inspires healthy living.

#### I. TRUE CHRISTIAN LIVING AS CONDUCTIVE TO HYGIENE AND HEALTH

Mental and emotional troubles are mainly due to a faulty adjustment to life and reality. A vital Christian religion offers a great stimulus to adjustment. Mental hygiene is very much a matter of understanding human nature. Knowledge of the body and the simple principles which govern physical health is very valuable and tends toward physical

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>3</sup>Keith W. Keidel, "Religious Influences for Mental Health," The Journal of Pastoral Care, XI (Spring, 1957), p. 23.

fitness. Furthermore, a knowledge of the working of the mind can prevent psychological disharmony to a great degree.<sup>4</sup>

"After all, in many ways health is a state of mind, and one's emotional and mental well-being is inexorably entwined with the physical processes of life."<sup>5</sup>

Christian living maintains health through the creation and sustenance of proper mental, emotional and spiritual attitudes.

The Christian Religion replaces the negative experience of guilt with the positive realization of forgiveness; self-centeredness with consecration; fear and worries with faith; anger with self control; hatred and resentment with love; inferiority attitudes with security; the deprivation of love with a sense of both being wanted and being needed in God's universe.<sup>6</sup>

The Christian religion gives a man a keener conscience to follow the rules of good health, which are indirectly the laws of God for man's good. Since the Christian seeks to live for the honor and glory of God, it is imperative that he be as healthy as he can.

Christianity not only promotes good personal health but it fosters hygiene and public health activities for the

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<sup>4</sup>Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology and Life (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1935), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Howard M. Kravetz, "Illness and Religion," The Journal Of Pastoral Care, XII (Fall, 1958), p. 175.

<sup>6</sup>Frank B. Stanger, A Workman That Needeth Not to Be Ashamed (Louisville, Kentucky: The Herald Press, 1958), p. 170.

common good. It is more than mere coincidence that the best health of the human race exists in the lands where the people have been evangelized by the Gospel of Christ. High religion and the lowest infant and child mortality rates are coexistent. James Van Buskirk in his volume, Religion, Healing and Health suggested nine characteristics of the Christian way of life which promote physical and spiritual well-being and health. The Christian religion approves and encourages honest and honorable work. Good honest work brings satisfaction, gives exercise, and helps the body and mind to function properly. Rest, relaxation and recreation logically follow good hard work. A man must relax in order to rest, and religion helps him to do so. The Christian learns to commit himself and all his cares, that bring tensions, to the Lord. The religious habits of the Christian contribute to relaxation and recreation. His habit of reading the Bible and prayer, his attendance at the services of the church, and his high appreciation for music all help to restore and sustain him in health. In his devotion to the Lord the Christian literally "renews his strength". The Christian religion offers faith to replace fear. The forgiveness offered through Christ brings deliverance from the burden of guilt. Grudges and hates are subdued and there is love for one another.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>James D. Van Buskirk, Religion, Healing and Health (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), pp. 121-145.

The Christian religion teaches and encourages the proper care of the body, the mind, and the spirit. Christianity inspires habits of clean living. The use of alcohol, tobacco, certain drugs and barbituates which are harmful to the body is discouraged. The true Christian views his body as "the temple of the Holy Spirit" and therefore he does not desire to do things that will harm or mar that temple. He wants to keep it clean. The Christian is not only concerned with his own health, but is usually the Christian people who lead in the community health and hygiene activities. This public health concern takes the efforts of Christian people to the national and international level. Besides the endeavors in government, the sending of Christian medical doctors as missionaries to other lands is a definite indication of the Christian concern for the health of all men.

## II. TRUE CHRISTIAN LIVING AS A PROVISION FOR AN ADEQUATE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

A person's philosophy of life includes far more than what he expresses by word of mouth to other people. He may say that his philosophy of life is one thing but the principles by which he actually lives may be far different. A philosophy really involves the whole inner life; it can only partially be expressed in words. A philosophy of life

. . . includes the person's orientation to his world,

his conception of himself and of the purpose of his existence, his system of loyalties and values, his system of beliefs and attitudes, his aims, his ideals, his modes of response, and his manner of thinking.<sup>8</sup>

"The need of a constructive philosophy of life if one is to have total health is an inescapable experience in mature and thoughtful people."<sup>9</sup>

The value of a philosophy of life. There are definite advantages in having a systematic organization of our values and principles. A definite philosophy of life serves as a compass to help a person along the way of life. A good philosophy of life provides principles of guidance for behavior. Furthermore, it gives direction to life. This is invaluable because a person going nowhere arrives at no certain destination. If a person's philosophy is organized around a definite purpose, he will develop a unified personality. He will be well enough integrated so that he can think, feel, and act appropriately in the various situations of life. Another benefit of a sound philosophy is that it gives emotional independence. When life has purpose and direction, a person will not be subject to whims, unrealistic feelings, and freak emotions. Finally, an adequate philos-

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<sup>8</sup>C. B. Eavey, Principles of Mental Health for Christian Living (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 109.

<sup>9</sup>Harry E. Fosdick, On Being A Real Person (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 256.

ophy fosters a plan for living. A plan which is conducive to the many adjustments which are necessary during the course of life. Adjustment includes selecting and guiding the drives, the individual desires to have function and subduing the others. If he chooses to live a clean moral life, he will subdue those inhibitions which would work in contradiction to his standards and his goals. Adjustment also involves the problem of living harmoniously with other people; and the problem of facing and resolving the dangers and difficulties of life. Man's adjustment to his environment, physical, social, and spiritual, is a necessity. Herein, lies the value of an adequate philosophy of life.<sup>10</sup>

Christian living as a guide for an individual's philosophy. True Christian religion provides for this adequate philosophy of life; and there is no true life except in vital connection with God. The Christian life of personal relationship with God enables a man to get away from himself by giving himself wholly and completely to God. With such an awareness of God, he has an understanding Friend, to whom he can go with all his problems and difficulties. This relationship with God gives the Christian an unconquerable faith and courage in the face of discouragement and misunderstanding--faith to attempt the impossible and faith that

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<sup>10</sup> Eavey, op. cit., pp. 117-121.

keeps him steady and composed even when he meets with nothing but frustration.<sup>11</sup>

A mental disturbance many times is the result of a failure to make adequate adjustment to some unfortunate experience. A man's philosophy of life and his religious conceptions are the result of the experiences he has undergone. This includes the teaching he has received, his interactions and considerations of the meaning of all the incidents of his life. Many people choose to live in an imaginary world. They assume that the mishaps of life always happen to the other fellow. When, suddenly and unexpectedly, they are struck by some accident or misfortune, they are caught totally unprepared. The inability to adjust themselves to this new and unhappy situation may result in nervous breakdowns, moodiness, anxiety, despair, irritability, cynicism, bitterness, and other unfortunate and degenerating attitudes.

From his religious faith man derives comfort in danger, misfortune, illness and disillusionment. The injustice which he is unable to avenge, either through his own power or through the law, is rendered more endurable by the hope that divine justice will infallibly strike the guilty one.<sup>12</sup>

Underlying all the principles of mental health is a basic philosophy--the philosophy of faith. This includes

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 123-124.

<sup>12</sup>Joachim Flescher, Mental Health and the Prevention of Neurosis (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1951), p. 440.

faith in God. Then, there must be faith in oneself, and faith in others. This faith is manifested in the ability of each person to improve and grow, faith in the desire and capacity of human beings to work out their problems cooperatively, and faith in the essential decency of mankind. Thus, a true philosophy of faith is a philosophy for good mental health.<sup>13</sup> A man cannot keep healthy very long without some kind of faith. The Christian's faith in God helps him to formulate his philosophy of life. It gives him something to live for and a guide to live by.

The primary cause of the typical moral and mental collapse is the lack of an adequate philosophy of life. That is, a man has no system of valid principles which vitalize and stabilize him day by day. In order to endure the stress of this day and age, it is imperative that personality be fortified by convictions which are real, inspiring, and applicable to the individual circumstances. Sincerity alone is not enough. A man's convictions must be wedded to solid fact in order to function effectively during a crisis. Here is the genius of the Christian faith. Its tenets are convictions based on fact. To be sure, this kind of faith can show results. A man's mental attitude influences his bodily

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<sup>13</sup>Harry Milt, How To Deal With Mental Problems (New York: National Association for Mental Health, 1960), p. 9.



processes. If he can recognize and rely on supreme realities and moral principles, he will have a solid basis for good mental health. As long as everything is going smoothly, a man can drift on in the sea of life and the defects of a treacherous philosophy of life are not likely to be made manifest. What he believes and trusts may not be practically seen unless his governing principles are severely tested. However, when a crisis arises, temptations assail, fortune takes wings, friends grow cold, health breaks, and loneliness oppresses, it is then that the absurdity of a false view of life is glaringly disclosed.

For example, the man who is morally confused or defeated has been betrayed by, or has betrayed, a philosophy of life which is opposed to eternal realities. He has gone against decency, honor, brotherly love, and trusting God. Jesus understood this basic law of normal living. He closed the Sermon on the Mount, which is a summary of His teaching, with a solemn declaration that those who heard His sayings and obeyed them would be as a man who built his house on the rock; those who disregarded them were compared to one who builds on the sand.<sup>14</sup> The two houses which Jesus refers to may be compared to two persons. The two men may or may not be much alike in ability, social standing, and material

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<sup>14</sup>Matthew 7:24-29.

prosperity. But both heard Jesus exhort men to overcome evil with good. Both had heard Jesus expound the fundamentals of the Christian life. In this respect they were on a parity. However, a sharp distinction divided the two men. The one had heard and heeded the teachings of Jesus; the other heard but rejected them. There was a period of time when all seemed to be well for both of them. But, the tests of adversity, deprivation, and sorrow came. The man whose life was regulated by Christ's philosophy of life was unshaken. The crisis merely disclosed the solidarity of the foundations upon which he had erected the superstructure of his way of living. In contrast, the man whose life was governed by deception, illusion, unreality, and fraud collapsed. The crisis overtook and overwhelmed him.<sup>15</sup>

This story indicates that it does actually matter what a man believes in and depends on and is guided by. What he is committed to with all his heart arouses feeling and then congruous action. If a man places his confidence in sham or falsehood or error, in the day of reckoning he will be demoralized and a nervous collapse may occur. But if a man puts his trust in truth and goodness and active support of God, he will be able to withstand the attacks of mis-

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<sup>15</sup>Karl R. Stolz, Tricks Our Minds Play On Us (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), pp. 237-241.

fortune. Instead of destroying mental health, an emergency met under God strengthens and confirms normality.

The man who is controlled by a philosophy of reckless expediency neglects self-respect and the welfare of others. His blatant disregard for the power and mercy of God is opposing the very nature of the universe and is bound sooner or later, to come to grief. He often does not avoid the destruction of mental health. In contrast, the man who has been led into the experience and meaning of Christian living is on the side of God and nature. He is in sympathy and harmony with the principles which govern the universe. Nothing is more practical, more effective, and more conducive to normal personality than a sound Christian philosophy of life. A substantial philosophy is not made in a day. It is nurtured in the school of Christian living. Moral strength is generated by each victory over inward conflicts and outward distresses. If the light already received is utilized, then new light breaks through. Faith in God is increased by exercise. True Christian religion is not a system of rules and practices which make for pleasant experiences and are collectively called life.

Vital Christianity is a relationship with a Personal Power other than and greater than man. It is a relationship in which man develops a wholesome, hearty, and normal personality as he seeks to achieve his destiny to honor and glorify

God. In order to keep mental and spiritual life on a high plane there must be frequent contact with the source of all life and growth. Through communion and fellowship with God, the Christian receives insight and courage. His faith in God helps him to formulate an adequate philosophy of life. By the way of Christian living, he achieves good mental health, a wholesome outlook on life and an insight into the forces which sustain him.<sup>16</sup>

### III. THE STIMULUS OF TRUE CHRISTIAN LIVING TO ADEQUATE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

The acceptance of the Christian philosophy of life will do much to develop and maintain a satisfactorily integrated personality.

The Christian way of life has within itself, from a psychological point of view, three great things: the moral exaltation and integration of personality; the social purification and enrichment of personality; the spiritual fulfillment of personality.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the centuries the Christian religion has held the key to moral stability and mental health. It demands respect for a Supreme Being and provides incentive to be of service to mankind. These factors assist in providing

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 242-249.

<sup>17</sup>John Martin, From Failure to Fulfillment (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 152.

a balance between the egoistic and social motives which make for a sound and socialized personality. Religion in general offers an antidote for standardless living. When a man's character rests on a foundation of intelligent religious belief, he will be inclined to follow the dictates of socially desirable principles. If he is actually and seriously motivated by Christian principles, he is likely to be a well-adjusted person. It is true that many so-called Christians do not live up to the Christian ideal, but this does not destroy the personality values inherent in the way of life laid down by Christ and His Gospel.<sup>18</sup>

The Value of purpose. Mental health requires that the individual believe in some purpose in the total life-process and likewise some purpose in his own life. For a man cannot live on an island of meaning surrounded by an ocean of meaninglessness. If the universe is crazy, then so are its parts. It is a fundamental truth that the Christian religion, with its faith in purpose, intelligence, and moral order in the universe, furnishes an indispensable undergirding for the health of personality.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>L. P. Thorpe and J. N. Holliday, Personality and Life (New York: Longman's, Green and Co., 1941), pp. 226-228.

<sup>19</sup>Hollo May, The Art of Counseling (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1939), pp. 216-217.

Advantages of Christian belief. The principles of integrity inherent in the Christian religion are fundamental to the maintenance of civilization. The Christian religion provides a distinctive contribution towards emotional maturity and the integration of the individual personality.

Some of the advantages of religious belief may be stated as follows: (1) It encourages the development of those social skills that mean so much for winning the approval of others. (2) It recommends a humility which in turn may tend to keep the ego within bounds. (3) It provides an avenue for the realization of a balanced blend between the self and selfless motives. (4) It encourages self-indulgent individuals to perform as duties those homely tasks which they do not naturally want to do. (5) It provides opportunities for service in a compelling cause. (6) It is an antidote for crude pragmatism. (7) It offers a life plan resting on the comforting factors of faith and hope. (8) Finally, it offers a form of security that may go far toward guarding the individual against the various forms of psychological disorders to which the human personality is heir.<sup>20</sup>

In order to develop a sense of integrity an individual must integrate his life around some ethical or religious concepts. When a child is growing up, some integrating idea or ideal must replace his parents as the objects of dependency and trust. This idea or ideal must embrace such virtues as honor, grace, faith and courage. If the mature adult has a core of security in his inner being, he can transmit a sense of trust to his children and thus start them on the way

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<sup>20</sup>Thorpe and Holliday, op. cit., p. 229.

to emotional well-being.<sup>21</sup>

The value of Christian ideals. Ideals have a dynamic quality and are important for growth and development. The Christian religion offers ideals that are not just cold abstractions but are warm and living realities. The "imitation of God" is regarded as the highest ideal. The New Testament teaches that God's Son Jesus Christ is the Divine Example upon which human beings are called to pattern their lives.

With a Christian ideal we get a stricter sense of justice, a more complete realization of duty, more delicacy of feeling, greater refinement of manner, more kindness and quicker sympathies; in short, although Christianity is more than mere morality, no morality is so lofty as that formed on a Christian ideal.<sup>22</sup>

Christian faith as an aid to self acceptance. The Christian religion helps a man to accept himself and to be realistic about his own abilities and capacities. Some aspects of his self ideal may be impossible to attain. Here religion helps by teaching humility and stressing God's love. To be realistic about life a man must admit sometimes that he is wrong. The Christian religion endeavors to teach a man

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<sup>21</sup>White House Conference Report on Children and Youth, "Religion as an aid to Healthy Personality," Pastoral Psychology (October, 1952), p. 36.

<sup>22</sup>A. T. Schofield, The Springs of Character (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1901), p. 210.

to recognize and confess his faults and failures. For example, the parable of the prodigal son teaches the value of facing failure, seeking forgiveness, and beginning anew. The Christian religion provides high ideals which are an inspiration and a challenge. It helps life to become significant, joyous, and rewarding.

The Christian view is that man's organism was planned by an all-wise and all-loving Creator. This in turn leads to an attitude of self-acceptance, which regards all aspects of the self as utilizable if properly understood and related. An attitude like this is an important attribute of a healthy personality. Healthy self-acceptance also includes rejoicing in one's special abilities and aptitudes and recognizing without resentment one's special limitations. Abilities should be recognized as gifts of God to be enjoyed and used for the joy of others. The Christian religion helps the individual to view his limitations within the framework of a lively sense of God's love. By so doing, they can be accepted without devastating emotional turmoil.<sup>23</sup> Unhappy situations are only symptoms that betray the inadequacy of the personalities which produce them.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>White House Conference Report, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>24</sup>Blanche Carrier, Free to Grow (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 1.



Christian living as an aid to personality integration.

Psychologically speaking, the human personality includes not only whatever social graces and winsomeness one may have, but also health, appearance, character, and ability. "Personality at its psychological best is a human organization in which integration and unity have been achieved."<sup>25</sup> The extent and quality of personality organization is determined by three things: environmental influences, native abilities, and the controlling philosophy of one's life. There are three ways in which the Christian religion may organize or reconstitute personality--definite conversion, gradual growth, and spiritual illumination. Conversion in the evangelical connotation involves a radical recentering of the personality. Then the Christian life of fellowship with Christ nurtures and matures the personality. The most noble personality, according to Jesus Christ, is the one most marked by godlikeness.

In the parables of St. Luke, Chapter 15, Jesus introduced and characterized four types of lost humanity and God's concern for their rescue--the impulsive and obtusely negligent, the underprivileged caused by a lowly birth or environment or both, the thrill-seeking, and the dutiful but uncharitable and harsh. Each class needed a recentering of life, a traumatic experience of the grace of God. Further-

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<sup>25</sup>Stolz, op. cit., p. 173.

more, the wholesome personality is constantly undergoing a process in which progressively higher intergrations are achieved. Christianity rooted in the realities of personal experience is a co-ordinating and controlling factor.

The vast majority of our mental experiences are not simple and unmixed but complicated. In many cases spiritual and moral control is exercised in a process of substitution whereby an unworthy response is displaced by a sanctioned behavior.

The final fulfillment of personality is found in the spiritual ways of life that are at the heart of the Christian faith . . . Jesus pointed the way of the spirit to the fulness of life in fellowship with God and man. He is "The way, the truth, and the life". The ways of the spirit in the realisation of life are charted by Him and He is the "light which lighteth every man."<sup>26</sup>

Christian living at its best produces durability, integration of character, and psychological freshness. It offers extended years of challenge and service, widening ethical and spiritual vision, harmony, stability, efficiency, health and a sense of well being. Christianity rooted in the realities of personal experience is a co-ordinating and controlling interest. Indubitably Christian living provides for adequate personality development.

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<sup>26</sup>Martin, op. cit., p. 141.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN RESOURCES TO THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The resources of the Christian religion are strong in the maintenance of health and the recovery of health. The Christian religion always has been the most powerful resource for meeting man's needs.

It unifies their discordant impulse about noble purposes; it effects satisfying social adjustment, both in human and cosmic relationships; it gives life meaning and value.<sup>1</sup>

The cause of Christ through the Christian religion provides a cause to which a man can devote his life with unqualified loyalty. It provides a basis for man to have fellowship with his God and with his fellowmen. True Christian religion gives assurance of the significance of all of life.

Christianity and mental health (and mental health programs) have much in common in that they both aim at right living. The true Christian life is characterized by high ideals and high ethical standards. This guards much against guilt, regret, and uncertainty. Christianity holds higher standards but it also offers resources beyond those of mental hygiene.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles T. Holman, The Cure of Souls (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 220.

When a person accepts, explores, and uses the resources which reside in God and the Christian faith, he is not fleeing from life's tribulations. While a vital Christian faith may not resolve all conflicts, some of which require a decision between two courses of conduct equally ethical, yet those who love God and find in Him resources for help and guidance will not utterly fall. When facing even the minor ills of everyday living, a vital faith in God can do much to improve the state of a person's health.

#### I. RESOLUTION OF GUILT, CONFESSION, AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Unrepented sin is a great cause of human anxiety according to Christian diagnosis. Unresolved guilt feelings play a considerable part in mental life, both in healthy and in sick minds. Restlessness, fear, confusion, and sense of futility are various evidences of the spiritual sickness of mankind. This malady the Bible calls sin. "From a psychological point of view sin is a misdirection of the energies of man."<sup>2</sup> Guilt is closely connected with sin. When it is realized that sin is antagonism to the nature, laws, and will of God and sometimes the laws of man the result is a consciousness of transgression. This sensitiveness of moral

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<sup>2</sup>Ernest White, Christian Life and The Unconscious (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 150.

discernment and feeling within the conscience is described as guilt.

A man may be legally guilty because he has broken the laws of his government. Also, when a man breaks God's laws, he is guilty before God, and comes under His condemnation. In this sense the Bible tells us the whole world is guilty. Then, there is the guilt feeling a man has when his conscience condemns him. He probably develops this sense of guilt very early in life, even before school age. This guilt is closely associated with the moral censorship within an individual whereby he distinguishes right from wrong. Psychologists allow that the principle of wrong doing must bring punishment is very deeply implanted in the mind. Also the idea that sin must be atoned for by some form of suffering, self inflicted or otherwise is resident in the mind. Because of these reasons guilt often brings about physical or mental suffering. Often the sufferer is unaware of any connection between his guilt and his symptoms. In other instances he regards his illness as a punishment for sins and sent by God.<sup>3</sup>

There is only one way that leads to soul harmony. It involves the painful acknowledgment of these sins, by confession, renunciation, restitution (wherever this is possible)

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-155.

and complete reliance upon the divine grace of God for forgiveness, help, and strength to lead a new life.<sup>4</sup>

No Christian who understands and accepts the fact of God's forgiveness should ever continue for long in a state of guilt. Confession and acceptance of the promises of forgiveness to be found in the Bible should rid him of it. It is surprising to find how ignorant some people are about the meaning of forgiveness. They never can enjoy peace of mind because they are continually haunted by the memory of some past sin. They continually dwell in the shadow of their own past misdeeds instead of advancing into the light and freedom of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. . . .

Quite a large amount of guilt feeling arises in the minds of some Christians because of misunderstanding. This false guilt is often due to a confusion of thought concerning sin and evil.<sup>5</sup>

It is an accepted fact that the Gospel of Christ still solves the problems of guilt and anxiety for millions of people everywhere. When God forgives, He also forgets. For a good many persons their religious faith is the only thing that keeps them going. Without faith in Christ, they simply could not make the grade; but with it, they live sunny and cheerful lives, and are a blessing to all those around them. The Christian Gospel so changes a man that he is enable to live in a world of frustration and defeat. It encourages men to change the conditions of human life so that frustration and defeat may not continue to be inevitable for every

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<sup>4</sup>Simon Doniger, Religion and Human Behavior (New York: Association Press, 1954), p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>White, op. cit., pp. 155-157.

child of man. Christian faith not only brings resources for this life, but the real anchorage of the human soul is in that eternal life which Christ made available.<sup>6</sup>

The conscience needs to be aroused and quickened or men will continue to drift to low levels of unwholesome living. If souls are to be made whole, they must be brought to a conviction of sin. The Christian religion endeavors to do this.

The need for confession of sin committed, or of wrong done, has been steadily insisted upon by the Christian religion as a condition of forgiveness and reconciliation. There is definite cathartic value in true confession.<sup>7</sup> Real contrition and true repentance is the honest owning of the wrong, and the free acceptance of responsibility in light of God's redeeming love as revealed in Christ Jesus. It is more than mere self rebuke; it is accepting God's just judgment of unfaith and sin. It involves far more than an easy rescue. There must be a frank confession of complete reliance on God's grace as the authentic power for reconciliation to God, and recovery of moral insight and spiritual energy.<sup>8</sup> The only ground on which God forgives is the finished work

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<sup>6</sup>Doniger, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>7</sup>Holman, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>8</sup>Albert C. Outler, Psychotherapy and the Christian Message (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1954), pp. 236-237.

of Christ on the cross, for it was there that the Lord bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Although man cannot understand it all, yet there can be perfect confidence and assurance that past sins are forgiven and will no longer rise up again.

The resolution of guilt, repentance, confession and a sense of divine forgiveness are all factors in a vital Christian conversion experience. They continue to be operative in the life of the Christian. When the anguish of guilt is dissolved, and tensions are released by repentance and confession, the power of Christ brings order out of chaos, and harmony where there was discord. The trend of a man's life and his tastes are completely altered. He experiences harmony and peace with God and in turn with his fellowmen. By the same means that he found new life in Christ, he endeavors to maintain and sustain that relationship.

## II. FAITH

Faith is more than mere belief. "Faith is devotion of total personality in loyal assurance. . . . The dynamic quality of faith is indicated in a volitional activity of purpose, commitment, and steadfastness."<sup>9</sup> True faith is a

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<sup>9</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Religion (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 200.



working faith. As the law of the Christian life it is always operative. This devotion of faith integrates personality.

The emotional quality of faith is indicated in a basic confidence and security that gives one assurance. In this sense faith is the opposite of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Without emotional security there is no relaxation, but tension, distress, and instability. Assurance is the firm emotional undertone that enables one to have steady nerves and calm poise in the face of danger or confusion.<sup>10</sup>

One of the characteristics of this space-age society is insecurity. People long for security--financial security, they desire to be secure in their home and family relationships, secure in their employment and secure in their social standing. Every man needs to feel that he has something on which to anchor. Continual uncertainty is mental torture. However, the most important security is often overlooked. Psychiatrists and psychologists are beginning to admit that faith in a Supreme Being brings stability and security. Indeed, an enduring faith in the living God is basic to all other securities desired in life. The whole pattern of life, now and for eternity, hinges on the inborn desire for security. It is not enough just to have faith. It must be a secure faith in a changeless Almighty God. This kind of faith will be certain for today, tomorrow and throughout

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

eternity.<sup>11</sup> It is on the sound basis of God's power and goodness and His Fatherhood. Such a faith in God gives meaning to life and takes away the fear of death.

A supreme and overmastering faith in God will not produce freedom from or annihilation of pain and suffering but they are easier to bear when there is a living faith. Faith is the highest form of the will to live. It is not static but dynamic, not just a theory but a living faith.

Faith is a grace of the Christian life. It is the power of God working in and through man's nature. The power and presence of God wells up from within. "The quality of personal faith is a determinant second to none in human behavior."<sup>12</sup> Faith that works germinates power in the life and becomes a motivating force. It is alive and issues in spiritual action. Faith frees a man from that unhealthy feeling of aimlessness. It points toward goals that are definite and worthwhile. Faith makes the unseen felt as a reality. Faith is the inner man's vision, his reason and his light. It reaches out to discover and know God.

Faith is a reliance as simple as possible upon the word, power, and love of another.

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<sup>11</sup>Clyde M. Narramore, This Way to Happiness (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), pp. 173-174.

<sup>12</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Personality and Religion (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 222.

Faith in its power to help you know, understand, and forgive other people liberates you from those unhealthy attitudes of malice, bitterness, and depression which destroy good health.<sup>13</sup>

When faith is no longer strong within, then man is weak, disorganized, and lost. Faith is dynamic in its action upon mind and body. Faith and trust are vain without obedience. The Bible presents faith in a two-fold way. The practice of faith falls upon man as a duty to exercise. It is also a gift from above and this power to trust God belongs to every man through the help of the Holy Spirit. As a man fights his doubts and gathers strength, he finds a stronger faith than he had previously. Faith is cultivated by meditation upon the ways and works of God. It was St. Augustine who said, "Faith is to believe what we do not see; and the reward of faith is to see what we believe." Faith is a vision, a quality, or capacity of the soul for action whereby spiritual truth is apprehended, and spiritual life is engendered. Faith binds the Christian to Christ as Saviour and Lord. It makes the unseen felt as a reality. Faith makes God near and dear to the heart. It can exist only by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is Christ as Savior, and not a system of truths, which is the object of faith. Faith in Christ is the source of the Christian life. This faith

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<sup>13</sup> John H. Miller, Take a Look at Yourself (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 139.

expanded becomes the resource for maintaining and sustaining the Christian life. Faith that does not control the life, is not real faith.

### III. PRAYER

Prayer is a way of realizing the presence of God. Prayer is a divine-human encounter. It is communion with God, a way of receiving His guidance in living, a way of committing oneself to Him in confidence and faith. Prayer helps one to look beyond and above himself and his circumstances. Prayer is the upreach of the soul of man in adoration, worship, thanksgiving, petition, supplication, and intercession. Prayer is born out of humility and dependence upon God. The inadequacy of human resources is urged as a necessity for the nourishment of the spiritual life through prayer.

Prayer is therapeutic but more than that it is prophylactic. For prayer offers release from tensions and stresses before physical symptoms have an opportunity to develop. Burdens and cares are cast upon the Lord in prayer. When man comes to God with his anxieties and problems, he comes to One in whom he has an absolute trust and reliance. He "steals away" to unload his painful burdens, troubles, and apprehensions. He also exercises complete confidence that God understands his expressed needs as well as his

inward sighs and unutterable concerns. Through this experience of prayer his complexes are solved, and his soul experiences release and deliverance from inner tension and torment.

Furthermore, man's trust that God not only understands him but also is able to help, gives him solace, consolation, new hope, and increased faith. But above all, through prayer there comes from God and flows into man's soul a divine, spiritual energy that heals, strengthens, renews and empowers those who seek and trust Him.

The need for solitude is often overlooked in this day of fast and congested living. Some would label solitude as unhealthy introversion or even escapism. But solitude is valuable to help one think calmly or see clearly in true perspective. Solitude through prayer is a way of standing apart for another view of the situation confronting a man. Thus, he can be himself more honestly and decide for himself more truly. The period or time of prayer can be a reality, a revelation of truth, a resource for the spirit by which to depart and live creatively.<sup>14</sup>

Prayer gives the opportunity to affirm one's faith in God. "Social relations are often external or casual, but in prayer one may meet God in a profound experience of commun-

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<sup>14</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Personality and Religion (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp. 125-126.

ion."<sup>15</sup> True prayer is prayer that voices from the heart a faith and confidence in God as never failing and sufficient for any and every need.

Prayer helps maintain health. But it is misleading to give the impression that God will always restrain the factors in illness in response to prayers of faith. While there is a strong presumption in favor of the fact that it is the will of God for people to have sufficient health to do the work to which God has called them, still men cannot be sure that it is always His will to answer every prayer to heal sickness or to keep one well. There are repeated evidences today as well as in Bible times, that the prayers, love, and concern of a large number of people have definite effects upon the mind of another at the unconscious level, which in turn have beneficial effects upon the body and/or mind of the suffering person.

The life of prayer is a positive help for good health. It does not assure freedom from infections, physical injury or the wearing out of the body; but it does help a person to stay free of the emotions and tensions which bring havoc to health. Prayer is putting oneself in harmony with the Creator and God of the ongoing processes of life. Through it resources for living are found for a true prayer life is

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

living in Him and He in the person.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. SCRIPTURES--BIBLE READING

The Bible contains the fundamental principles of mental health. It speaks to every condition of life. Those who are sick can find healing and comfort; those who are discouraged can find solace. There is rest for the weary, strength for the weak, and guidance for the confused. There is encouragement for the oppressed and warning for the oppressor. In the Scriptures are found wisdom for the mind and food for the soul. The Bible guides in the quest for truth, in making decisions which concern daily life and in praying. It has been a reliable guide for emperor and slave, for saint and sinner. The prudent instruction of the Bible is loved by the wise for it enables one to keep himself, his passions, and his actions under guidance by what he knows to be right and necessary. The Bible is light for the path of life. The foolish are warned and rebuked thereby.<sup>17</sup>

The Bible has a real bearing when it comes to mental and emotional problems. It emphasizes the fundamental relationship which man has to God, to himself, and to others.

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<sup>16</sup>James D. Van Buskirk, Religion, Healing and Health (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 149.

<sup>17</sup>George H. Muedeking, Emotional Problems and the Bible (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 23.

The Bible teaches that life itself is a gift of God. Therefore the body should be respected as such a gift. The Bible gives both the good and bad side of life and people. It lays bare the facts and does not gloss over anything. Man is better off to face real life with a realistic Bible than with the popular illusions sometimes promoted by the newspapers, magazines, movies, radio and television stories. Therefore the Bible contains many examples of mistakes, error and wrong ideals and sin. It does not display life as a lark but shows some of the hazards and likely problems of life.

The Bible does underline God's direct personal interest in my needs. And therefore this therapy may also function in emotional disturbances. For it is here, if anywhere, that I need assurance that my earnest, honest efforts to attain spiritual maturity will have God's approval. We are free to assert therefore that the knowledge of God's active interest in our lives can assist the native powers of the mind to promote mental healing. This will encourage us to continue to seek mature adjustments in life, when frustrations tempt us to surrender to neurotic solutions to our difficulties.<sup>18</sup>

The Bible reminds men to live in the present tense. The emphasis is now and today. Men are encouraged to "forget those things which are behind." Thus, the Bible strongly teaches the responsibility for the present, so that decisions are to be made and principles followed as if this were the last day of life.

It is characteristic of the neurotic personality or

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



the mentally or emotionally disturbed to live in the past and hope for the future and at the same time fail to face the present realistically. There may be a rehashing of past mistakes and regrets and an ideation for the future but this type of personality fails to meet his present problems head on. The Bible teaches a man to be honest with himself and his fellowmen. He must be honest with himself in order to be perfectly honest before God. The inner psychic conflicts that arise from deceit (self deceit and the deceit of others) are likely to lead into neurotic involvements. To deny or to suppress the unwholesome feelings that may arise within is a form of self-deceit. These too can grow into a serious emotional conflict. It is much better if these feelings can be acknowledged and openly faced rather than denied and dis-owned. The Bible encourages this very thing. Furthermore, the Bible renders distinctive help in its witness to the forgiving grace of God. It is this witness which helps in emotional problems, for often it meets the problem squarely. For many times, behind the emotional problem there is a strong self condemnation or unreserved judgment against oneself. When the distraught person can feel and rely upon the forgiving and loving way in which God sees his life, he finds support for a new way of life.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-22.

Christians who read the Bible not out of duty, but in devotion and love experience great joy and delight in going to the Scriptures to revel in God's promises and in God's love. The Scriptures give support and courage for spiritual life and devotion. The Bible helps in the pursuit of integration by reminding man that he totally belongs to God. Therefore, the goal of all impulses, drives, emotions, and thoughts should be in accord with the will of God.

The most cherished and best remembered passages reveal how largely the writers of the Bible were concerned with people's inner life, with motives and difficulties, with psychological health and happiness.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. . . . The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things. . . . Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness. . . . As a man thinketh, so is he. . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. . . . With what measure ye mete shall it be measured to you again." All these verses--and the Beatitudes might well be added--are statements of unquestioned psychological fact. Again look at a few of Jesus' exhortations: "Let your yea be yea and your nay nay . . . Be not anxious therefore for the morrow. . . . Do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them. . . . Make friends with thine enemy whilst thou art on the way with him. . . . Judge not that ye be not judged. . . . Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you and pray for them who despitefully use you."<sup>20</sup>

It is obvious from these few observations that mental

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<sup>20</sup>Thomas Rennie and Luther Woodward, Mental Health in Modern Society (New York: The Common Wealth, 1948), pp. 261-262.

health principles are prominent in the Bible. The Bible helps to promote realism towards life. It stimulates the native healing powers of the soul. The Word keeps the mind focused on the present. It encourages honesty. The truths and teachings of the Bible are supportive and lead towards ego-integration. God has guidance to give to man through the Bible. Within certain limits, the Word of God offers help in the serious and generalized mental, physical, and spiritual difficulties of this generation.<sup>21</sup>

#### V. WORSHIP

Christian observance of Sunday contributes to mental health. Sunday is a day of joy, a day of relaxing in the Lord. It is a relief that it is Sunday and the day can be devoted to God and His worship. For the Christian, Sunday is freedom from the cares of the secular, material world. It means freedom to enjoy the Saviour. However, one day of rest and worship in seven, is beneficial to more than the spiritual side of man. The physical and the mental also have opportunity for relaxation and renewal.

The worship service gives an emotional lift and a sense of righteousness and a new hope for those who have acquired a strong sense of guilt, or who have been frustrated

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<sup>21</sup>Muedeking, op. cit., p. 26.

and broken in spirit by the hardships of life. On a plaque at the Bok Singing Tower in central Florida are these words, "I come here to find myself. It is so easy to get lost in the world." How true this is; and it is in devoted worship that a man can find himself and be refreshed at the fountain of living waters.

Worship is essentially the adoration of God. In the worship experience one recognizes the presence and power of God, appropriates His proffered benefactions and is moved to obey His will. Worship culminates in self-giving to God. It furthers the religious integration of personality.

The man who bows in reverence before God may become aware of personality defects, and his energies may henceforth be redirected. Hatred may be eradicated, extreme self-abasement banished, unreasonable fears dispersed, anxiety and distrust destroyed, and harsh circumstances faced with courage. Tension may give way to relaxation, inward turmoil to the tranquility of a sound mind. He who has caught the spirit of the universe, or rather let himself be caught by it, has become still and learned that God is a living, sustaining Presence. He is not far from the kingdom of normality.<sup>22</sup>

Worship is an effective means for securing a total adjustment of the personality to the environment upon which the health of soul, body and mind depends.

The principle of worship is valid, for it builds on the well-nigh universal need of people to add up and find meaning

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<sup>22</sup>Karl R. Stolz, Tricks Our Minds Play On Us (Nashville, Tennessee: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 251.

in their total experiences and to integrate the same. Worship encourages the tendency to aspire to values which are yet unachieved but are within the range of possibility. If worship, in its form and content, is aimed to serve the real needs of worshippers, it will fortify their minds and strengthen their spirits. Worship enhances the sense of personal worth, and also the worth of others. This contributes to social vision, social action, and social solidarity. Although worship is first of all an individual encounter, it is also a socializing experience.<sup>23</sup>

Worship is the unique experience which combines the elements of man's inner world with man's external world.

Worship seeks response from and fellowship with the ultimate Reality in the midst of which our lives are set. It seeks to know, and seeks inspiration to do, the will of God, and thus to maintain fellowship with him.<sup>24</sup>

The central object of genuine Christian worship is God as he is revealed in Christ. The very fact that man can worship and has the ability and understanding to do so is a gift of God. The Almighty God is worthy of man's worship; man feels the urge to respond with love, adoration, praise, confession, and self-giving. Through these ways the human side of man's relationship with God is created and developed. Prayer, meditation, reflective thinking, and the revaluation of

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<sup>23</sup>Rennie and Woodward, op. cit., p. 264.

habits, attitudes, and purposes, all in the presence of God, bring solace, tonic, and a challenge for living.

A true worshipper is honest and sincere, and earnest in his quest for truth. There can be no dodging, evasion, or deceit when worship is genuine. "Real worship then involves facing oneself in his relationships with others and with God."<sup>25</sup> Through worship insight is gained into oneself, his relationships with God and with others. "To worship God leads us to be like God and obey His will."<sup>26</sup> There is no better atmosphere in which to come to an understanding of the purpose of God for one's life. In worship there is an entering into fellowship with God, and there are fruits as a result of that relationship. It is a growth experience. Real Christian worship results in a greater capacity for relationships with God and with one's fellow men on the basis of faith and love.

The growth and development of personality cannot take place in a healthy manner through constant seeking of externals; it is essential to take time out to become acquainted with the inner self and subjectively relate the facets of life. The exercise of worship is invaluable to

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<sup>25</sup>Carroll A. Wise, Psychiatry and the Bible (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 142.

<sup>26</sup>Charles L. Allan, God's Psychiatry (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1953), p. 48.

mind and spirit. Genuine worship is a healthy activity, wherever or whenever it takes place. Worship contributes to objectivity, teachability and coordinates the energies of body, mind, and spirit into one common ideal and purpose. Thus worship promotes that balance of life which is essential to health.<sup>27</sup>

## VI. PREACHING

Preaching is related to mental health by the using of real psychological facts to help demonstrate Christian truth. Through good preaching insight is gained into such things as the nature of love and of hostility. The preacher's sermons should touch life's problems. They should be down to earth and practical, not just theological and philosophical. Through preaching the minister presents positive resources for living the Christian life. He seeks to advance the spiritual and mental health of his congregation.

If the preacher will talk in terms of everyday feelings, attitudes, habits and aspirations, commonplace life situations, and familiar Biblical scenes rather than in technical formulations of a theological or psychological nature, he can accomplish a great deal to help his people to better understanding of themselves and better adjustment to each other.<sup>28</sup>

The preacher can develop a manner and method of

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<sup>27</sup>C. B. Eavey, Principles of Mental Health for Christian Living (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 266.

<sup>28</sup>Rennie and Woodward, op. cit., pp. 262-263.

preaching which gives people the feeling that they are understood. His messages must always be sincere, honest, and Biblical. People want to know about God, about human life, and particularly how their own lives can become more meaningful and secure.

Preaching has tremendous possibilities if it is life-centered and Biblical. Insight and strength are likely to be found when life problems are dealt with in preaching. True Biblical preaching exposes error and sin and motivates confession. Likewise, preaching on the great promises in the Word brings assurance and reassurance. Furthermore, true preaching inspires and nurtures faith in God, faith in oneself and faith in others.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME TO MENTAL HEALTH

Since the family is the primary institution for fostering mental health, a Christian atmosphere of love and harmony and unity in the home promotes principles on which to create and sustain mental health. The home has the earliest and most constant effect on basic beliefs, personality development, and on the formation of lifetime patterns of behavior.

#### I. MENTAL HEALTH AS A FAMILY AFFAIR

Mental health is truly a family affair. It begins in childhood. Childhood is a time for growing, learning, and enormous curiosity. The child can develop best in an environment where relations between children and parents are happy and relaxed. In spite of ups and downs of daily life, he feels secure and happy when the home atmosphere is emotionally good. Parents who understand their children and their needs can help them grow up to be secure, happy and healthy. Parents should try to balance the freedom they give their children with an equal amount of responsibility; cherish them without being possessive.

The primary goals of mental health in family living are (1) the establishment of a basic sense of well-being

and security and (2) the progressive development of all the natural endowments and interests of children so that they can understand, accept, integrate, and use them with increasing satisfaction and social competence. To insure such growth, the following secondary goals are likewise essential: (3) the consistent development of self-confidence and a genuine sense of adequacy; (4) the development of sociability and habits of cooperation which enable children to enter into give-and-take of family life and prepare them to participate effectively in work, play, and citizenship; (5) the emotional and psycho-sexual maturing which is necessary for mental health and for successful marriage and parenthood.<sup>1</sup>

Parents have the gigantic task of helping their children to meet the realities of life. The discipline of children without them suffering fear, repression or ridicule is not easy. But children who are ready to assume responsibility must also be willing to control themselves. Children cannot be just told to be this way or that. They must be shown. Parental example and guidance are necessary to build up self-confidence in children. The ideal family functions as a unit for the common good, for the nurture and maturity of the individual members.

## II. THE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE HOME

How a child is taught to view God makes a difference not only in worship, but also in values and in facing and resolving conflict situations. A child's basic needs are

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Maves, The Church and Mental Health (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 132.

more likely to be met in the environment of a Christian home than in the non-Christian.

W. I. Thomas discovered four basic drives in the human personality. He called these the "four wishes". These wishes are security, response, recognition, and new experience. Security is the need for the wherewithal to support life. The wish for response grows from the need of all people for affiliation, the desire to love and to be loved. This cannot be omitted without devastating consequences for the personality. Recognition is simply the need everyone has to be respected and recognized by others as a person of worth and value. The wish for new experience grows out of man's almost innate ability to become easily bored. There is provision in the Christian religion and within the confines of the Christian home for the satisfying of these basic wishes. Furthermore, these innate four wishes serve as soil for the Christian life of an individual. The basic need for security and love is most likely to be met in the Christian. Christian stewardship demands that a father provide food, shelter, and clothing for his family. Christian teaching presents a heavenly Father who cares for and provides for His own. This kind of faith brings a sense of security to even the very small child. The wish for response is particularly prominent in the Christian religion. The idea that "God is love" and the religious experience of love between man and

God helps to meet his need for response. There is no doubt that the wish for response often sends the Christian person to the Divine source for satisfaction of his need. Even more implicitly involved with the satisfactions Christianity has to offer are the wishes for recognition and new experience. The Bible teaches the priesthood of all believers. There is emphasis on the value of an individual in the sight of God. There is recognition of value and personal worth by Christians amongst one another. Like its satisfaction of the other wishes, Christianity fulfills the need for new experience with peculiar intensity and fullness. The casting of oneself by faith upon the mercy of Christ provides a radically new experience for the Christian believer. Furthermore, the genuine Christian life is not static. There is a growing and new heights of devotion to be reached. The weekly worship services of the church provide for new and renewed experiences in the Christian faith. Then the times of revival or evangelistic meetings provide more profound and exciting spiritual experiences. Thus, the growing child will most likely have his four basic needs met in a Christian environment. His desire for security, response, recognition and new experience will be met within the atmosphere and environment of the Christian home and its outreach.<sup>2</sup> A har-

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<sup>2</sup>Walter Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), pp. 67-69.

monious Christian home in which to grow up in is the best preparation that young people can have for marriage and establishing their own family. Paul Maves has aptly said, ". . . religious faith is made up very much of the stuff of daily experience in the family."<sup>3</sup>

Christian education is interested in the spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional health of youth and adults. In the Christian home, children receive religious education by precept and example. Christian education so given in the home, cannot be completely received or matched elsewhere. The home and the church co-operate in Christian education. Christian education is interested in every aspect of family life. It seeks to guide so that children are brought up in homes where the emotional climate is permeated with basic trust, confidence, and belief in the worthwhileness of life. The child's long dependency in the home offers opportunity for such teaching. Awe, respect, and reverence may well be caught from parents who have a genuine spiritual life. "Through faith in God, worship of the Saviour, and obedience to Him as Lord, the family, as well as the individual Christian, finds mental health."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Maves, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>4</sup>Franklin F. Ellis, "The Answer to Mental Health" Child Evangelism, XV (February, 1956), p. 8.

Christian influence begins in the home with the child and parents feeling a common fellowship that transcends mere cultural requirement or social function. This Christian spirit may be fed by additional resources outside the home until it becomes rooted in the individual. The person who will let his own religious philosophy become a part of his total integration will be able to establish some firm roots of Christian character as he leaves the family circle to make his own way in life. But before such Christian influence can take root it must be nourished in the home. The trust that a child implicitly puts in a loving parent must in the process of maturation be placed in others. It is easier for the child who has been reared in a home of faith and trust to accept the person of God as a loving, heavenly Father in whom he can trust and believe. This confidence in and reliance upon God sees the individual through when relatives and friends fail to meet expectations. The child early develops a feeling of security when a parent is loving. The child grows up to be secure when the parents interpret God as loving above and beyond human ability where parents may not be able to maintain a loving relationship.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that the Christian

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<sup>5</sup>Keith W. Keidel, "Religious Influences for Mental Health," The Journal of Pastoral Care, XI (Spring, 1957), pp. 20-24.

home teaches and promotes mental health by the following Christian attitudes: (1) an acceptance of self, with the inclusion of God's acceptance of the individual with all his potentials as well as his limitations; (2) A view that one's own self and fellowmen may be at fault for God has required no man to be so extremely perfectionistic as to become a god unto himself; (3) A belief and confidence that man's organism and world are planned by a loving God; (4) an assertion, that in spite of the fluctuations of human endeavors and social customs, certain basic truths remain, these truths being perpetuated and interpreted by organized Christianity. Within the Christian family there is a common loyalty to a Supreme Being beyond human limitations. When Christian influences are endorsed by the family, sound mental health principles are assured for those who desire the more abundant life as taught by the Christian gospel.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO MENTAL HEALTH

Beyond the home, it is the special calling of a Christian congregation to provide a health-promoting spiritual environment. Christian experience in the fellowship of the Christian church strengthens family living, promotes growth in faith, and character and provides a form of instruction in the principles of healthy living.

The aim of mental hygiene as fostered by the Church is the progressive and relatively uninterrupted development of personality through the surrounding of the individual with wholesome formative influences, the inculcation of proper standards of conduct, the growth of creative religious attitudes, and the correction of moral and mental defects in their incipient stages. Its function is largely preventive.<sup>1</sup>

Preventive measures for mental health play an important role in society. Here the teachings of the Christian church make a definite contribution. "In the fellowship of the church there is refuge from the world of change, relief from loneliness, and support and companionship in the quest for higher things."<sup>2</sup> The Church provides an atmosphere where a man can

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<sup>1</sup>Karl R. Stolz, The Psychology of Religious Living (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), p. 321.

<sup>2</sup>White House Conference Report, "Religion As An Aid to Healthy Personality," Pastoral Psychology (October, 1952), p. 37.



find himself. His average life is occupied with a bewildering number of things from early morning until late at night.

# I. THE REGENERATING AND RENEWING VALUE OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM

For almost everyone, the preoccupation and routine of life, in spite of its distressing multiplicity, has a kind of unity of pattern. All these many things seem necessary if a man is to come to each evening sufficiently fed, clothed, housed, entertained, and tired enough to call it a day. Yet if a man tries to do too much, it may mean that he will do too little. There seems to be a deep need in man to take time out to analyze and appreciate discriminately what he does. "Be still" said the Psalmist. The church offers a place of stillness where the too much distracted, too noisy and clattering self can periodically quiet down. Music is great balm to the soul and mind.<sup>3</sup>

The hush of silent prayer enables the self to gather itself to itself; to find meanings and depths in life and in things forgotten; to feel joined with others in sensing mystery, an obligation, and a faith too deep to express in words.

Such times of silence are times when we have a chance to be loosed into affection. Too much noise; too many voices; too many suggestions and counter suggestions; too many calls to do this and that, all tend to put

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<sup>3</sup>H. A. Overstreet, The Great Enterprise (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1935), p. 197.

edginess into life. To be still is to give ourselves the chance to recover kinship and friendliness.

We can, to be sure, experience such stillness by ourselves; but there is something about experiencing it with others than adds a dimension--all of us there, small and humble and silent before the ineffable.

Out of the stillness the voice of the minister can fittingly come to remind us of things we tend to forget. We call these the things that give meaning, wonder, and outreach to life, that remove our littleness, and that make us strong with the binding power of love. To love God is to love these. To love God is to love immeasurably life that creates and sustains us, and within which we in turn create and sustain.<sup>4</sup>

## II. THE CHURCH'S CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE WHOLE MAN

While the Church's mission is primarily spiritual, still there is concern for the welfare of the whole man. By helping individuals to get right with God and right with their fellowmen, the church promotes mental and emotional health.

Religious meditation is one of the most potent correctives for the tricks that human nature plays on itself. It helps one to achieve harmony with the Infinite through relaxation, the exposure of the personality to God, and the disinterested adoration of God.<sup>5</sup>

The services of the church and the worship experience provide this opportunity for restoring and renewing the inner

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>5</sup>Karl R. Stolz, Tricks Our Minds Play On Us (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 249.

man. The central purpose of worship and quiet meditation consists of open receptivity, holy awe, the consciousness of the moral sublimity of God, of security and forgiveness found in God.

Go to church to worship and commune with God and His people. Let the music rest or inspire our spirits; let the prayers uplift our souls to feel the presence of God; let the words of Scripture be a message to each of us; find something in the sermon that will help. Let the problems and troubles of the week be lain aside, let them "simmer", and even if there be times when none of the formal parts of the church program prove helpful, let us turn our thoughts to God and open minds and hearts to Him, think on Him, rest in Him.<sup>6</sup>

### III. THE FELLOWSHIP AND REFUGE PROVIDED BY THE CHURCH

The local church presents a fellowship with a more intimate sense of belonging than any other organization outside the family. An understanding of Christian experience can be developed that goes beneath the externals of religious caste, class, and creed. It is the inner appropriation of Christian truth whereby men find access to and understanding of each other by reason of their personal relationship to God. In essence, healthy Christianity binds people together in such a way that their individuality is enabled both to be realized and to be consecrated to the total community of relationships to which they belong. This is a religion of

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<sup>6</sup>James D. Van Buskirk, "Religion, Healing, and Health" (Book Condensation), Religion and Health, I (July, 1952), p. 62.

mature and responsible relatedness, which does not interpret disdain for people as the call of God to withdraw from or attack other people.<sup>7</sup>

Christian faith includes the deepening and enlarging of a trustworthy relationship between persons. A Christian person trusts his life to a creative relationship with God as the ultimate source of values. In the security of this relationship the Christian is in a better position to realize his inner aim. He will have more courage to exercise his creative potentialities in the face of anxiety, the threat of meaninglessness, and tragic separation of death. In this kind of relatedness a Christian person can accept the forgiveness of God and his fellowmen in spite of the guilt and condemnation he feels in view of his failures. His self-affirmation is encouraged by the value that God places on a person. Upheld by a sustaining relationship to a higher power, the Christian can communicate his feelings and seek more productively to fulfill his personal and community life.<sup>8</sup>

Personal fellowship with God naturally brings about a fellowship of Christian believers. Christian fellowship is

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<sup>7</sup>Wayne Oates, "Religious Factors in Mental Illness," (Book Condensation) Religion and Health, IV (June, 1955), pp. 60-61.

<sup>8</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Personality and Religion (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 224.

very helpful. The very nature of it has brought together the weak, sinful, and needy persons. Awareness of their needs has brought men to God in Christ.

Our very belonging to the church is a confession of our need for each other's help in dealing with the stresses and strains, the stumblings and fallings, the accidents and the dark difficulties that we cannot understand or accept. Therefore, the confession of need for help on any particular problem should never set us apart or cause us to feel different from our fellow human beings, and especially "those who are of the household of faith".<sup>9</sup>

Healthy Christian religion binds people together in such a way that their individuality can be realized and at the same time consecrated to the total community of relationships to which they belong.

#### IV. THE MINISTER AS A FIGURE FOR HELP AND A COUNSELOR FOR EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

By virtue of their position and function, ministers can contribute much towards mental health. The attitude of trustfulness extended toward the minister places him in a unique position to help troubled people. The very fact that he is a minister has some advantage. A minister, who is adequate, so stimulates persons that they discover and define their needs, helps them to face unpalatable facts with intelligent courage, and acquire or devise techniques for the

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<sup>9</sup>Wayne Oates, Where to Go For Help (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 9.

mastery of crises which have developed in the course of their lives.

The pastor is called upon to deal with many persons having a variety of problems. He encounters people who have compulsions, conflicts, tensions, and fears which restrict the development of the life of faith. When the pastor attempts to remove these barriers, he very definitely promotes mental health. However, pastoral care is essentially a ministry of the Word of God and its claims upon a life. The aim of pastoral work is to bring people into a right relationship with God through fellowship with Christ the Son and to establish people in that relationship. There is hope that mental health will be an indirect but real secondary benefit consequent upon the achievement of the primary goal which is spiritual. Spiritual health must always be the pastor's primary concern and psychic or mental health a vital secondary objective. "In view of religion's concern with personal and social goals and with ultimate and time-tested values, the minister is in a position to help people develop a sound philosophy of life and to strengthen their sense of security."<sup>10</sup> The minister utilizes the means of the Gospel and prayer to convey a message of forgiveness of sins and

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<sup>10</sup>Thomas Rennie and L. E. Woodward, Mental Health in Modern Society (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1948), p. 241.

encouragement in sanctification.

The pastor is "a minister of spiritual reconciliation, and his calling requires him to enter into the lives of his people, both to share their heartaches and appreciate their deepest needs and aspirations."<sup>11</sup> In his visits he makes a pastoral call, rather than a social call, and endeavors to make a contribution to the person's spiritual well-being whether he is well or sick otherwise. As he relates the person to God fears may be calmed and worries lessened. For God has made man to live at full capacity in total commitment to Him.

Christian ministers have three important opportunities of service in promoting good health. They have an obligation to minister to the sick, to teach a Christian philosophy of sickness and health, and through the various ministries of the church aid in the prevention of sickness. The first practical task for the Christian minister is that of teaching a sound theology of sickness and health. He must make use of all possible light from the Bible. To do his best work in this phase of the ministry, the pastor must have had psychological studies during his training for the ministry.

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<sup>11</sup>Johannes Plekker, "Psychology and Pastoral Care," Christianity Today, IV (November 9, 1959), p. 7.

It has been estimated that nine tenths of religion's contribution to health is preventive. The pastor has an important responsibility and opportunity to prevent sickness through the promotion of good health. This he does in part as he goes about the discharge of his normal pastoral responsibilities.

In so far as his ministry results in leading people to replace hate and anger with love, and fear with faith, he thereby is God's instrument in removing fertile sources of sickness. In so far as he persuades persons to confess their sin and guilt, to repent, and to depend upon the grace of God for spiritual and physical health, his ministry has therapeutic value. In so far as he teaches people to be still and know that God is the Lord, to relax themselves in God's presence until their strength be renewed (Isaiah 40:31; Acts 1:4, 8), he also guides his people into mental attitudes conducive to the elimination of tension and the increase of divine vitality. In so far as he encourages and guides his people in their prayer life, he helps them unblock the channel through which God gives His blessings.<sup>12</sup>

The minister contributes to the climate of health. With his diverse functions in regard to his parish and to the community as a whole, he becomes a community caretaker many times over. The minister is a person to whom many people turn when faced with personal or family crises. Furthermore, he has more or less routinized contacts with people at important choice points in their lives. For example, he confronts them with the importance of Christian commitment; he may perform the marital ties; he is likely to be present when people are replanning their lives at times of bereavement, and the like. Also, the minister is the carrier of

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<sup>12</sup>Wade H. Boggs, "Faith Healing and the Christian Faith," Pulpit Digest, XXXIX (September, 1958), 44-46.



important ideas and ideals, which he interprets to his congregation in a way he hopes will have a useful impact on their lives. He is the administrative head of the local church which has the potential of meeting many of the important needs of his congregation. The church functions to provide for religious education, spiritual uplift, fellowship, and mutual support for people of like interests, age, or social status. The minister has a broad outreach because he is often sought out by community groups for help and advice regarding social and other problems of a community-wide nature.<sup>13</sup>

In the last analysis the office of the minister exists to help man achieve and maintain his most fundamental and significant relationship, his bond with his Maker; to help man to be what God made him and wants him to be in this life upon earth. Thus, Christian concepts of mental health and personality wholeness are bound up with God-relatedness. So ministers, because of their unique relation to society and to God, make a distinctive contribution to the health and welfare of any community.

#### V. THE VALUE OF THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH TO MENTAL HEALTH

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<sup>13</sup>Donald C. Klein, "The Minister and Mental Health: An Evaluation," The Journal of Pastoral Care, XIII (Winter, 1959), p. 230.

The church ought to be a mental-spiritual health center. Christian faith provides social as well as cosmic support to moral endeavor. The institution of the church and of all Christian organizations bring support and nurture to those who choose the new way of life and moral endeavor. Christianity has some primary explanations for the problems of evil and these have aided men in their efforts to maintain sanity and poise in the midst of adversity.

The church and the pastor give Christian guidance. Guidance is thought to be educational or informational, giving facts as a basis for decision. The term "Christian" as used here includes a set of beliefs, ethical values, and moral goals which issue from a transformed heart and mind. The spiritual nourishment needed for adequate mental and physical health calls for a constant renewing of faith, hope, and love. These inner resources are maintained and sustained through prayer, appropriate worship, Bible reading, preaching, et cetera. This is the program of the church. Furthermore, the church encourages and teaches the home to develop and use these spiritual resources. The activity program of the church seeks to translate Christian theory into practice.

Christian education and Christian experience greatly influence one's beliefs and philosophy of life. These in turn will have a bearing on mental health.

The kind of respect one has for himself and for all other men; the kind of morale engendered when fidelity

to justice and humaneness may involve inconvenience, persecution or death; the kind of worship and fellowship of which one is capable; the kind of inner firmness with which one may meet anxiety and tragedy--all of these psychologically important factors are profoundly affected by whether one regards human life as a cosmic accident or as an integral part of a providential order.<sup>14</sup>

No version of the Christian faith regards man's condition as the resultant of purely extra-human forces; man always has a hand in making himself what he is and what he shall become. However, the church as an institution of God is interested in helping man to help himself. The Church offers a spiritual environment wherein a man may find himself by finding a personal relationship with God. Furthermore, the church program seeks to nurture and mature this relationship to God. The church provides opportunities for action and service which develop a healthy spiritual personality. Through the ages the Christian religion has given people a way of removing their unhealthy feelings, especially hatred and guilt, and to restore a sense of rightness. How true it is that health giving forces can be found in spiritual environment, nourishment, and overcoming hindrances. The special calling, privilege, and the responsibility of the church is to promote the principles of hygienic living through transformed lives. These principles are inherent in the faith that the Christian church proclaims. The Christian education given

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<sup>14</sup>Paul B. Maves, editor, The Church and Mental Health (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 22.

through the church program is on a high moral and ethical level.

## VI. THE UNIQUE POSITION OF THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

The church has a definite place in the educational program to remove the stigma and shame attached to those who become mentally ill and to their families. The Christian religion teaches a man to have understanding and sympathy and compassion for his brother no matter what his sickness or misfortune. Many denominations encourage the showing of mental health films in the churches. Christian psychologists and psychiatrists are invited to lecture on occasions. The church assumes special responsibility to those who are mentally ill. The ministry of Christian love, reconciliation, and acceptance goes far in supporting the disturbed person. The church has ministered to sick souls in such a way as to bring support, succor and salvation to millions of persons.

Furthermore, the church co-operates with all the other healing and health supporting agencies. The pastor and the church work with hospitals, social and welfare agencies, and clinics, as well as individual psychiatrists, and psychologists. Some churches have a more extensive and intensive program of mental health than others. A good

church program for mental health adds up to four things.

(1) A practical philosophy for Christian living at all ages from early childhood throughout the entire life span. The emphasis and major content of education and of social fellowship build very naturally from age to age. The important thing is that the program be made practical at all stages and serve the real needs of the learners, participants, or worshippers. (2) The program must make for healthy self-acceptance, including the acceptance of negative features of personality make-up and provide opportunities for people to take on increasing social responsibilities and carry them through with satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. . . . (3) The Church program should constitute a genuine fellowship of believers who have similar goals in life. Ideally, the fellowship should be a many-sided one, including opportunities for learning, for worship, for social participation, for practical usefulness to those with whom members are closely associated and also others to whom they are related only in Christian service. (4) The total program of the Church should contribute toward a healthier society in its community, national and international aspects . . .<sup>15</sup>

Mental health, from a Christian viewpoint, both contributes to and issues from the inter-relationship between the individual, community, and God. The basis of this relationship is faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. The wholeness which is received as a gift of God is commensurate with the wholeness of self-giving. Obviously, the springs of character and creative living, which lie in part below conscious efforts, must be transformed or renewed through the power of God in Christ. Only then can the total self, as integrated and unified, be carried into the man-to-God relationship and likewise, be

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 156-157.

manifested in a man-to-man relationship. Christian living fostered and guided through the church contributes to mental health individually and collectively. The Church offers the saving grace of Christ which releases disordered personality, inward turmoil, and social maladjustment. The intimate fellowship of the church provides a wholesome atmosphere for emotional maturing and mental health.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

Each individual is the sum total of what he was born with, plus everything that has happened to him up to the present moment. He is the product of his inheritance, cultural background, environment, the personality of his parents and others, school influences, religious influences, the morals and customs in which he lives.

It is true that what he is up to puberty has been largely beyond his control. The past cannot be relived, but the present can be modified and real improvement can be realized in the future.

Mental virility is the result of the maturity gained from the minor conflicts of life. If a person knows how to use his mental abilities in minor conflicts, he will be able to face the crisis situations with confidence. This confidence is energized and enhanced by a personal faith in God.

The Christian has a constant friend, companion, and guide to help him along life's way and through the difficult situations. The quest for peace of mind or what may be called good mental health is universal. The Bible verifies the unrest of the natural man in his unredeemed state. This

peace of mind can only come as the result of certain internal qualities and external circumstances.

Aside from an ultimate faith in the goodness of God and his fatherly care for an individual who commits himself to God, there is no absolute security in our kind of a world. . . . It helps a lot to realize that there is no absolute security in life unless you can find that security in something greater than yourself--in God.<sup>1</sup>

The feeling of personal security is a vital element in maintaining mental health. God is on the side of health and healing. The Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences available for producing harmony and peace of mind, and confidence of soul. Sociologists confirm that religion is the core of civilization and the mainspring of moral values, one of the prime integrative forces in society.

The spiritual environment necessary for mental health in its fullest sense is that of Christian love and fellowship of the Spirit. "Effective application of the basic principles of mental health calls for a deep and abiding respect for all human beings, regardless of their condition."<sup>2</sup> The Christian, more than anyone else, creates and maintains this kind of respect for all human beings. The Christian way of life is not something morbid within the spirit and intro-

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert W. Hansen, Common Sense Living (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup>"Mental Health," The Encyclopedia Americana (1960 ed.), XVIII, 645.



vertive in nature. "It is a way of active endeavor within the wide fellowship of a Kingdom wherein are grace, collective virtues, corporate guidance and empowerment, plan, purpose, and vision for the life of man as man."<sup>3</sup>

Christian living at its best wins others by the gracious attractiveness of example, by mastery of the self life, by the radiance of sheer goodness, gentleness, and love--by the persuasion of a Christ-like character and by the very loving-kindness of God reflected in the Christian's words and ways.<sup>4</sup> Man cannot get away from other persons. He is born into a family, has brothers and sisters, friends, teachers, neighbors and a host of other acquaintances. With all these he develops relationships, and these relationships affect both him and others for better or for worse.

Furthermore, a man cannot get away from God. He may think he can and in trying to so deceive himself that he thinks he has gotten away, but he cannot escape from the fundamental Reality that has created, undergirds and sustains all of life.

In his fear he may turn and run only to be swallowed up by the very fear by which he is being driven; in his rebellion he may assert his omnipotence and supremacy

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<sup>3</sup>John Martin, From Failure to Fulfillment (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), pp. 148-149.

<sup>4</sup>Simon Doniger, Religion and Human Behavior (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 2.

and project himself into the place of God, only to find himself defeated by his own rebellion; or in love he may respond with an attitude of trust through which he feels a deep sense of kinship with the Ultimate Source of his being.<sup>5</sup>

The Christian's relationship to God, to himself and to his group, his concept of right and wrong, and his interpretation of God's purpose for his life all contribute to the integration and well-being of his personality. Paul E. Adolph has well stated ". . . that Christianity, conscientiously applied to the emotional tension problems of our era, offers complete and satisfactory solution, not only to these tensions, but also to the disease symptoms which they so often produce."<sup>6</sup> A person may become sick in relation to himself as one who feels guilty about his need for love. He may have a sick relationship with others, illustrated by fear and withdrawal. A person's relation to God may be sick, as he feels guilty and condemned before God. When a man is sick in one of these relationships, he is likely to be sick in others or in all of them. In fact, his total personality is likely to suffer even though he becomes ill only in one area.<sup>7</sup> The Gospels indicate a vital relationship between physical, mental and

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<sup>5</sup>Carroll Wise, Psychiatry and the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1954), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Paul E. Adolph, Health Shall Spring Forth (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>Wise, op. cit., p. 3.

religious or spiritual health. Christian faith operates powerfully, not only as a curative force but also as a preventive medicine. Christianity is even more impressive in its power to prevent moral and mental disaster, than in its power to rescue and reclaim. Some have estimated that about nine-tenths of Christianity's contribution to health is preventive.

A vital Christian faith can integrate the contradictory impulses of life into the ongoing purpose of Christian devotion--to live for and glorify God. Unless there is a vital personal relationship to the Almighty, many spiritual hindrances, to health cannot be overcome. This is because emotions are little influenced by reason in many instances. Such things as resentment against God or against people, greed, fear, jealousy, grief, the sense of frustration, futility, or despair, need more than psychological or medical help in order to resolve them. "The true secret of mental health is being right with God through His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>8</sup> Christian faith is no guarantee of a healthy body; but it does help men to make and keep their bodies more fit than they would otherwise be. Christian faith gives a keener conscience to follow the rules of health and the laws of God for man's good.

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<sup>8</sup>Franklin F. Ellis, "The Answer to Mental Health," Child Evangelism, XV (January, 1956), 9.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

It is the opinion of this author that many cases of mental and emotional breakdown could be prevented if children and teen-agers were trained in Christian principles and practice. So many men and women drift through life without a sense of unity of existence and a high reason or purpose for living. Their lives are rather aimless because they have no moral or spiritual anchor. They continue on without hope and without God in the world. There is no harmony within, so consequently there can be no harmony without. The world's problems are frustrating. The tensions of life are overwhelming. Non-Christians may try to meet these by attempting to evade reality, to shield themselves from the facts of life, to deny and disbelieve. They falter and go down under the strains and stresses of life because they have no spiritual reserves. When people are tied up in knots within, will power alone will not get them out of it.

But the one who will accept God as Lord of his life and truly surrender to Him will be greatly relieved of fears, tensions, anxieties and frustrations. Amid the tensions of life, the Christian finds refuge, relaxation, and rest in a satisfying relationship to God. It is valid reasoning to suppose that the God who made man, has also revealed the best way of life for him. To pursue God's way makes for health of body, soul and spirit. The healthy and well-

balanced Christian has found a way of adaptation to life here on earth, although he lives and moves and has his being in a spiritual world. When he is weak, Christ can make him strong. If he has conflicting impulses, emotions, and feelings, he can find peace and victory by turning himself over to Christ unconditionally and without reserve. If Christ is dwelling in the heart by faith, then He is the very center and core of being, and a balance in life can be achieved which is impossible without Him. When self dominates a man, he is always unbalanced. If God is allowed to be the center, a man's life will be characterized by poise, self-control, self-discipline, and contentment. He will not be unduly elated by success or cast down by failure.

Christian character expands itself in the acceptance of reality, constructive independence of thought and action, emotional stability, and the socialization of the personality. Against the steady growth of anxiety and emotional stress, Christianity pits its message of faith and hope. The Christian church and individual Christians as well are endeavoring to generate enough of the stability as well as the healing stuff of life to not only maintain the mental-spiritual health of its adherents but also to release it to other more disturbed people. It does make a difference what men believe about God. God has made every provision for man--mentally, spiritually and physically. It is up to man

to expose himself to God's bountiful resources by responding to His gracious invitation.

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